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Doctoral Student's Name: Kathleen K. Wallace

Student ID Number: 1030852

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As Indicator of Teaching Readiness

The signatures below indicate that the above-named doctoral candidate has defended his or her dissertation in front of the dissertation committee. The committee hereby recommends to the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies that the candidate should receive the following:

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Signatures of Agreement to Above:

Chair: Amy K. DeFuria 12/21/20

Member: B. Bulman 12/21/20

Member: Niralee Patel-Lye 12/21/20

Approval:

Director: Amy K. DeFuria

Dean: Khaled El-Hiti

Exploring Novice Teachers' Perceptions of edTPA as Indicator of Teaching Readiness

Kathleen K. Wallace

University of Bridgeport

December 21, 2020

“The only way to get a thing done is to start to do it, then keep on doing it, and finally you'll finish it.”

~ Langston Hughes, *The Big Sea*

Dedication

To Mom and Dad: “Thank you” doesn’t come close to being enough said. You have sacrificed so much to put me and the guys through college, and you have never once waived in your love or generosity. You’ve helped me navigate a most turbulent world, at times, and instilled in me the resiliency to persevere. Through the difficulties and the celebrations, you’ve always been there in equal measure. I love you, both, and I’m so, so, so happy that you are here to witness this **final** walk across the stage!

To my husband PW: Thank you for your large part in making this happen. Without your love and support of this project, I never could have done it. I love you.

To my sons Patrick, Josh, Colin, and Shane: Everything I do is for you. I love you more than any words could ever say.

To Martin: Thank you for being the big brother who always set the bar high. You’re running out of time to catch me!

To my NDP Girls: Thank you for a lifetime of laughter and friendship. You are strong women who have been my rocks, my role-models, and my inspiration. *Here’s to us—there’s none better.*

To KG: My sounding board and dear friend . . . Just one example of good things happening when you shoot the ball!

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Abstract

edTPA is an educative performance assessment designed to measure teacher readiness. It has gained momentum across the country; yet, it has met with resistance from educators in various roles. Previous studies have reported concerns that the assessment is a barrier to the profession and that it undermines the educational value inherent in the clinical placement experience. The literature also showed value in the process as it relates to creating a common framework for evaluating programs and candidates and cultivating feelings of collegiality. However, previous scientific research focused on perceptions of teacher candidates, university professors and certification officers, and mentor teachers. This collective case study utilized mixed methods research to address the gap in edTPA literature related to novice teachers' perceptions of the assessment as an efficacious tool. The researcher examined two research questions: 1.) What are novice teachers' levels of self-efficacy regarding readiness to teach as measured by the edTPA Teacher Survey? 2.) How do novice teachers perceive the edTPA process as an influence on their professional practices? Framed by Bandura's social learning and self-efficacy theories, a Likert-type survey and semi-structured interviews were used to explore participants' recollections of the edTPA process and its influence on their current practice.

Results showed that new teachers have high levels of confidence related to teaching readiness, but that the edTPA process was not an influential factor. New teachers felt that the edTPA process was redundant and tedious, interfered with their clinical experience, and is not relevant to daily practice as classroom teachers. A major outcome revealed that new teachers are using mastery experiences to build efficacy and hone their teaching craft *in spite of* the edTPA experience. Recommendations include a re-tooling of the edTPA assessment and preparation process to ensure a more authentic experience and meaningful long-term value for new teachers.

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Chapter I

Introduction

This collective case study explored the perceptions of novice teachers who completed the edTPA portfolio assessment process for initial licensure or program completion in Connecticut and who are now employed as a classroom teacher in the state. There is scant research that uses the lens of novice teachers through which to examine the edTPA as an evaluative and educative tool. This study aimed to address that gap using a collective case study with mixed methods data collection. Through survey data, the researcher sought to gain an understanding of novice teachers' self-reported confidence ratings as a result of having completed the edTPA portfolio process. Concurrent with the survey administration, the researcher collected and analyzed qualitative data comprised of participant interviews, lesson plan analysis, and edTPA scores to elaborate on the issue and gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of the participants. The researcher analyzed both data strands independently before merging the data with the goal of painting a rich tapestry that fully illustrated the issue. By using purposeful sampling, the researcher identified participants who could provide the viewpoints of current teachers whose edTPA and current classroom experiences could in turn aid in further developing the complex issues surrounding the edTPA assessment in Connecticut. Essentially, the researcher intended to understand whether the edTPA assessment process created confident and prepared teachers and whether those novice teachers internalized and transferred the elements of the edTPA tasks to their current practice.

Background

By almost any standard, many if not most of the nation's 1,450 schools, colleges, and departments of education are doing a mediocre job of preparing teachers for the realities of the 21st century classroom. America's university-based teacher preparation programs need revolutionary change—not evolutionary tinkering. (Duncan, 2009)

Duncan's words can leave no doubt in the reader's mind that our nation's educator preparation programs are failing to produce teachers of quality who are classroom-ready on their first day of employment. This lack of preparedness presents issues on many levels. Duncan (2009) pointed out our 30% high school drop-out rate, the 60% of Black and Hispanic students who fail to finish high school on time, and the nearly 50% of low-income teens who drop out of high school. Our nation's schools have a duty to meet the needs of all students from all backgrounds and zip codes. These numbers are an alarming statistic that should be a wake-up call to all educators. Moreover, Duncan (2009) pointed out that the current global economy demands our students have not only high school diplomas but college degrees to compete. The time when a high school diploma was enough to afford one a reliable profession and comfortable retirement is no longer a reality in this country. In addition, the looming mass exodus of retiring teachers from the Baby Boomer generation will create a significant shortage in the experienced master teachers our students so desperately need (Duncan, 2009). A spotlight has been shown on the weaknesses of our educational system from teacher preparation to student achievement, and the public has demanded greater scrutiny of the teaching profession and the ways in which we prepare those individuals. The demand has set the stage for use of the edTPA assessment as a potential educative and evaluative tool that can serve to better prepare our teacher candidates and inform programmatic changes in our EPPs.

However, the change efforts that positioned an opening for the edTPA can be traced to 2002, when the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was signed by President George W. Bush. NCLB pushed for a professionalization of the teaching profession and espoused that “every child in America ought to have a well-qualified, fully prepared, and committed teacher” (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2001, p. 11). The legislation instituted increased accountability on school systems and states receiving federal money requiring that states include in their compliance plans specifics surrounding what steps they will take to ensure that poor and minority children “are not taught at higher rates than other children by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers” (NCLB, sec. 1111[b][8]). States had to develop academic standards and test students against those standards in reading and math.

NCLB prompted further convergence by the U.S. toward international norms, including a national curriculum, national standards, and academic testing, yet U.S. policy makers failed to consider that other countries also provided supports such as universal healthcare, a highly professionalized teaching force, decentralized school systems, and widely available pre-K programs (Charzyńska et al., 2012; Fowler, 2012; Ripley, 2013). This oversight laid the groundwork for an inevitable clash among education policy, teacher preparation, and practice as policy-makers attempted to impose a homogeneity on U.S. society and educational systems that did not match the needs of a diverse society and student population.

Nevertheless, No Child Left Behind continued to evolve during President Obama’s administration, and test scores of students began to be linked to teacher effectiveness, teacher evaluation, and even teacher pay in some states (Fowler, 2012). Federal incentives under Race to the Top (2009) and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) required participating states to evaluate individual teachers by calculating gains in students’ test scores.

Additionally, the United States Department of Education proposed to “evaluate Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) by using value-added test measures for the students of teacher education graduates” (Darling-Hammond, 2016, p. 89). It is true that these policies led to widespread changes in practice, but research showed that results gleaned from measuring teacher and EPP effectiveness against student test scores were highly unstable (Darling-Hammond, 2016). These practices led to significant pushback in Congress by the states, and the most recent ESEA (December 11, 2015) prohibits the Secretary of Education “from prescribing any specific methods for teacher evaluation” (Darling-Hammond, 2016, p. 89).

Research Problem

Policy makers and other education stakeholders demanding an evaluation process for pre-service candidates that is both reliable and objective, spurred the design of better measures aimed at capturing the often abstract and elusive nature of teaching and learning (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000; edtpa.aacte.org). Thus, individual states have adopted their own methods for teacher preparation and evaluation, including the use of summative portfolio assessments such as the Educative Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA) to prepare candidates for the classroom. Though edTPA is not a direct outcome of the NCLB legislation, a related component is the concept of highly qualified teachers. These are individuals with a bachelor’s degree, a state teaching license, and knowledge about the subject area in which one teaches. While the law requires that teachers designated as “highly qualified” possess both certification and content knowledge, it does not require that teachers demonstrate their teaching skills. So, while content knowledge is federally required, pedagogical skill is interpreted at the state level (Cohen-Vogel & Hunt, 2007; Fowler, 2012).

During the Race to the Top Era, school districts sought highly-qualified teachers or worked to bring current teachers up to code in order to comply with the mandate and be eligible to receive federal funds. In the 2017 session of the General Assembly, North Carolina went so far as to tie the highly qualified status to edTPA scores and tacked on a salary supplement, stating in Senate Bill 257 that “a ‘highly qualified graduate’ is an individual entering the teaching profession who has graduated from an approved educator preparation program located in North Carolina (i) with a grade point average of 3.75 or higher on a 4.0 scale, or its equivalent, and (ii) with a score of 48 or higher on the edTPA assessment . . . a highly qualified graduate who is employed by a local board of education shall receive a salary supplement each month at the highest level for which the graduate qualifies” (S257 Part VIII Sec 8.2 a. and b.). These sort of policy moves raised the stakes even higher for teacher candidates and created a ripple effect that has spread to educator preparation programs (EPPs) at our nation’s institutions of higher education. With edTPA cut scores being mandated at a rapid pace across the country, educator preparation programs must respond with programmatic and policy changes in order to prepare students for success on the exam.

Currently, edTPA is being used as a performance assessment to evaluate teacher candidates’ practice and pedagogy in more than 951 educator preparation programs in 41 states and the District of Columbia (edTPA.aacte, 2020). Some states are still exploring its use while others require edTPA as part of program completion or for state licensure, but it is the high stakes label that many state policies have tacked on to the edTPA that has many stakeholders disgruntled. While it is universally accepted that there must be high standards for those wishing to become educators, there is broad interpretation surrounding the methods by which those standards should be evaluated leading to the problem of practice: Through the eyes

of novice teachers, how effective is the edTPA as a means of evaluating new teachers and predicting their readiness for the classroom? Despite objections from stakeholders at a variety of levels, the state of Connecticut became the most recent to adopt the assessment and implemented edTPA *without* cut scores in the fall of 2018. The following year Connecticut established successful completion of the edTPA, as indicated by meeting minimum cut scores, for all teacher candidates as an eligibility requirement for initial licensure.

Purpose Statement

Developed for educators by educators, edTPA is a performance-based, subject-specific assessment and support system used by educator preparation providers (EPPs) to emphasize, support, and measure the skills and knowledge that teacher candidates need from day one to help all students in real classrooms learn. (ct.gov)

This quote is laden with strong intentions; however, prior studies have limited research into these ideals to stakeholders that do not include novice teachers who would have intimate knowledge of the experience. Furthermore, there have been no published studies focused in Connecticut that have looked through the lens of current teachers who completed edTPA to obtain their perceptions of the assessment. The purpose of this study was to describe efficacy levels related to readiness to teach and how the edTPA process influenced the professional practice of novice teachers who completed the edTPA for licensure or program graduation requirements as part of Connecticut's first cohort under the high-stakes label.

With claims that edTPA is a barrier to the profession in a time when teacher shortages are on the rise, and when states like North Carolina are linking higher edTPA scores to salary “bumps” for new teachers, it behooves the state of Connecticut to have 360-degree feedback

from all stakeholders (Duncan, 2009; Garcia & Weiss, 2019; Will, 2020). The voice of recent graduates who passed the edTPA and are now employed is noticeably absent (North Carolina General Assembly, 2017; Thompson, 2020; Working Group, 2020). This researcher's experiences in teaching a graduate writing methods course with embedded edTPA preparation reveal a wide array of candidate responses to the portfolio ranging from feeling overwhelmed and anxious to a sense of increased self-efficacy related to teaching ability. It is essential for these candidates, once employed as full-time professionals, to have a platform from which to share experiences and how those translate to practice. Feedback of this nature can only improve the edTPA portfolio process in Connecticut's EPPs and P-12 partners, and this study can contribute to the larger body of research necessary to further meaningful conversations surrounding the issue.

Research Questions

This case study addressed gaps in the research and gave voice to those who have first-hand experience in completing edTPA in Connecticut by examining the following research questions:

1. What are novice teachers' levels of self-efficacy regarding readiness to teach as measured by the edTPA Teacher Survey?
2. How do novice teachers perceive the edTPA portfolio process as an influence on their professional practices?

Framework

A primary research question in this study explored how novice teachers perceive the edTPA process as an influence on their professional practices. The underlying theory supporting

the exploration of this question relies on Albert Bandura's social learning theory, which stresses the importance of observing and modeling others' behaviors and attitudes. Bandura (1977) posited, "Learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. Fortunately, most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling" (p. 22). With this theory in mind, participant responses to their experiences and subsequent readiness will be discussed in terms of the behaviors, attitudes, and emotions demonstrated by professors in preparation programs as well as by mentor teachers in the student teaching classrooms. Components of the underlying processes of the social learning theory include attention, motivation, and self-perception which puts this theory in both the cognitive and behavioral realms. The theory is also the foundation for practice of behavior modeling, which is used in various training programs, including education by way of the student teaching experience (Bandura, 1977). The idea of an apprenticeship is one in which behaviors are modeled by a master and then later duplicated by the observing novice. This practice, also interpreted as cognitive apprenticeship, seeks to make visible the internal processes that go into teaching (Collins et al., 1991).

This study also explored novice teachers' efficacy regarding classroom readiness as a result of having completed the edTPA process. Anderson (1994) pointed out that individuals learn the cues and rules for interpreting efficacy via observation. Inasmuch as the student-centered edTPA framework of planning, instruction, and assessment is modeled by cooperating teachers and subsequently observed by candidates in clinical placement, candidates' efficacy beliefs would likely be molded and informed by those experiences. A study by Sharp et al. (2016) explored the relationship between self-efficacy and perspective teachers using an instrument that was part attitudinal and part content knowledge. The first portion of the

instrument directed participants to rate their perceived ability to teach literacy on a 100-point Likert scale (0 = no ability; 100 = highly certain can do). The second part of the instrument included 20 multiple-choice questions that measured teacher knowledge. These questions were based on the self-efficacy topics, assessing content knowledge related to those topics. The authors note that prospective teachers with a greater sense of self-efficacy appear to internalize the teachings of educator preparation programs at a greater level, which would suggest that EPPs consider candidate efficacy, and opportunities to foster it, early within their program models in order to benefit their candidates and the students within their future classrooms. Sharp et al. (2016) emphasize that “teachers with high self-efficacy are willing to spend more time, effort, and perseverance for the success of their students” (p. 243). In this sense, efficacy beliefs and positive classroom experiences that benefit students and teachers are linked. This study will discuss the extent to which participants believe their preparation impacted their current state of personal efficacy.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was determined by the exploratory research questions proposed, which could best be explored through the implementation of a case study approach using mixed methods of data collection. Quantitative survey data and qualitative data in the form of teacher observations and participant interviews were collected in order to provide the most complete picture surrounding the issues. Data collection and analysis took place using a convergent parallel design. This design

occurs when the researcher uses concurrent timing to implement the quantitative and qualitative strands during the same phase of the research process, prioritizes the methods

equally, and keeps the strands independent during analysis and then mixes the results during the overall interpretation. (Creswell & Clark-Plano, 2011, pp. 70–71)

In this study, a survey was administered in the quantitative strand and semi-structured interviews and classroom observations were conducted in the qualitative strand. The purpose of using different strands in this study was to most fully develop teachers' perceptions related to the research questions. The concurrent design of the data collection is appropriate as is the convergence model (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). In phase one, data collection, both strands of the data remained independent of one another; then during phase two, interpretation and comparison of the strands occurred. Because the strands remain independent in phase one, the design fits the concurrent definition as opposed to sequential in which one data strand would be dependent on the other (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007).

The edTPA Teacher Survey (Appendix A) measuring perceptions of edTPA concepts was administered and enabled the researcher to gain an understanding of the confidence levels, or efficacy, that teachers held in relation to their feelings of readiness to teach. Through the use of a Likert-type survey, respondents rated their confidence levels on a scale of 1–5 on 29 questions that fall into three areas: pedagogical knowledge, knowledge and skills, and learning environment.

Qualitative data was acquired using a case study model. Creswell and Poth (2018) defined case study as a “qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information” (p. 96). A case study approach is appropriate as a means to obtain a rich and inclusive assortment of data that will illustrate the issues at play. A *collective* case study, specifically, was utilized so as to best

represent various viewpoints on the topic, which were represented through analysis of the lesson plans and semi-structured interviews of 10 teachers. Semi-structured interviews with case study participants and lesson plan analysis using a checklist adapted from edTPA Task 1 rubrics provided multiple opportunities for participants to share their perspectives and opinions with the researcher.

Participants were selected through purposeful sampling. Creswell (2015) explained that purposeful sampling is best used when one must identify individuals who have the information necessary to address the issue under the microscope, so to speak. For this study, the survey was administered to graduates from the selected institution who completed coursework and edTPA preparation between the fall of 2018 and the spring of 2020, received their teaching credentials in Connecticut, and now hold a full-time or long-term substitute teaching position in the state. The case study participants were purposefully sampled from the same population, and the researcher sought to identify participants who were willing and who could most fully respond to the various issues that emerged in edTPA literature including potential cultural or linguistic factors that could impact one's edTPA experiences.

Definitions

1. BEST (Beginning Educator Support and Training in CT): Prior to the edTPA, Connecticut utilized the BEST portfolio, which was compiled after completion of an accredited educator preparation program (EPP) in the state during the first two years of teaching service. The portfolio included planning and preparation of lessons, formal and informal assessments, artifacts of teaching, and reflections of teaching (Bernard et al., 2019; CT Department of Education, 1999).

2. Candidate or teaching candidate: A candidate is a student enrolled in an educator preparation program (EPP).
3. Certification/licensure: Teaching certification or licensure is the culmination of the process of obtaining a teaching credential that allows one to legally work as a teacher within a designated content area, grade level, or other educational field in a specified state in the United States.
4. Clinical placement/experience (student teaching): This is an instructional experience supervised by the students' preparing institution, and it is usually the culminating experience taken in one's final semester. It is generally a requirement for certification when candidates follow a traditional program of preparation.
5. Educative Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA): edTPA is a "performance-based, subject-specific assessment and support system used by teacher preparation programs throughout the United States to emphasize, measure and support the skills and knowledge that all teachers need from Day 1 in the classroom" (edTPA.com/about, 2020).
6. Educator Preparation Provider: The entity responsible for the preparation of educators.
7. High-stakes assessment: A high-stakes test is an assessment used to make important decisions about students, educators, schools, or districts, most commonly for the purpose of accountability, reward, punishment, or advancement (edglossary.org).
8. Novice: For this study, a novice is a teacher within the first three years of teaching.
9. Performance Assessment: A performance assessment is an authentic assessment that is used to evaluate a teacher candidate's ability to successfully complete the central

teaching tasks of planning, instruction, and assessment and engage in the reflective practices that lead to continual professional improvement and personal development. In this study, the edTPA, BEST, and PACT are examples of performance assessments.

10. PACT (Performance Assessment for California Teachers): PACT is “a portfolio-based assessment wherein teaching candidates create a teaching event that is an extended documentation of a segment of student teaching. Integrated across the domains of teaching, Planning, Instruction, Assessment, Reflection and Academic Language, PACT requires candidates to demonstrate both content pedagogical knowledge and higher order thinking skills” (SCALE, 2020).
11. Portfolio assessment: A portfolio assessment is a collection of academic work that is used to evaluate whether a student has met prescribed academic standards. Examples include edTPA, BEST, and PACT.

Delimitations/Limitations

This research was delimited to novice teachers within the first three years of full-time employment who hold a professional teaching license in Connecticut. Additionally, this study was delimited to participants who attended and completed an educator preparation program at the selected university in Connecticut. The final delimiting factor was that all participants successfully completed edTPA preparation during clinical placement or other coursework at the selected institution, as indicated by their status as currently successfully licensed and employed. These delimitations were a necessary component of the study because they directly address the gap in the research that exists at the state level in terms of unheard voices that could inform other practitioners. Participants in the survey were purposefully sampled based on the study's criteria

for participation. The intent of using this sampling technique was to contribute to the existing research and acquire perspectives from individuals whom the literature showed as being potentially disadvantaged in the edTPA process. These include teachers of color or teachers with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

A limitation to this study was the extent to which participants were comfortable and able to recall details and feelings from their edTPA experiences while also being able to relate those to their current situation. Another possible limitation was the interruption of some participant's clinical placement and edTPA experience due to the COVID-19 pandemic that caused school systems nationwide to resort to distance education in the spring of 2020. As a result of the pandemic, most candidates in the spring of 2020 were permitted to waive the edTPA requirement for certification; however, candidates still received preparation and instruction on the edTPA during their program. The feelings and circumstances unique to each participant may have impacted their perceptions in ways that may not be clearly articulated and may have also added an undue amount of stress due to the uncertainty of their preparation progression. The sample size for the survey data was relatively small given the specific boundaries of the study, and so the overall population represented is rather small. Additionally, the sampling strategy itself further limited the number of participants and the extent to which this researcher could provide a rich and thorough context for the issue. The very specific boundaries of the cases created a narrow pool of perspectives. There are no other known limitations to the study.

Assumptions

The researcher is an adjunct professor at the institution selected for the study. The researcher teaches a graduate writing methods course that includes successfully completing an edTPA portfolio in order to earn a passing grade. Based on conversations with students and

students' submitted course reflections, the researcher has garnered opinions from students about the edTPA assessment. It seems that most students view the edTPA as an anxiety-inducing and overwhelming task. This researcher assumes that most candidates beyond my particular course also believe this to be true. Despite the complaints of undue stress and the daunting nature of the assessment, there also exists a sense of accomplishment at having successfully navigated the edTPA during their clinical placement. The researcher had to set aside any preconceived notions of the assessment for the purposes of this study.

This researcher also assumed that participants were open and honest in their responses to the extent that their memory and recollections of their experiences allowed. The researcher did not allow any pre-conceived notions to influence the data interpretation and relied solely on research-based methods for collection and analysis.

Significance of the Study

Significance to Theory

The research suggests that a significant factor influencing student achievement is the quality of the teacher in the classroom (Akram, 2019; Engin, 2020; Sirait, 2016). Furthermore, one's self-efficacy plays a key role in one's motivations and ultimately in candidates' successes or setbacks in the classroom. The most critical experience that influences efficacy for candidates takes place during student teaching where candidates learn from studying expert teachers, engaging in authentic teaching practices, and reflecting on those performances (Sharp, Brandt, Tuft, & Jay, 2016).

Bandura (1993) pointed out that human behavior is purposeful and goal-oriented. Teachers who possess strong self-efficacy beliefs are more inclined to be enthusiastic about and

strongly committed to their professional practice; they set high standards and goals for themselves in the classroom, and they have an overall belief that they can be outstanding teachers (Gamborg et al., 2018; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). The connection between one's efficacy and their instructional practices seem closely linked. By examining novice teachers' self-efficacy, specifically as a result of their edTPA preparation and experiences, this study contributes to the body of knowledge surrounding efficacy theories and teacher performance as well as the efficacy of the edTPA as an evaluative and educative tool for teacher preparation through the eyes of the study's participants.

Significance to Practice

The 2018 edTPA Administrative Report released in October of 2019 emphasized the edTPA as an educative tool, noting

as candidates are provided with formative opportunities to develop and practice the constructs embedded in edTPA throughout their programs and reflect on their edTPA experience with faculty and P–12 partners, they are more likely to internalize the cycle of effective teaching (planning, instruction, and assessment) as a way of thinking about practice—a way of thinking about students and student learning that will sustain them in the profession well beyond their early years in the classroom. (Pecheone et al., 2018, p. 4)

Thus, the assessment should be used as more than a snapshot in time, and it would be valuable as a means of providing direction for in-service development of new teachers. With that in mind, it would be beneficial to hear from current teacher in regards to how they personally are using their edTPA experience and to what their district of employment is using the edTPA feedback.

As the debate surrounding the efficacy of the edTPA assessment as a high-stakes tool continues to swirl, the voices of these participants add additional points of consideration that were previously unheard when the state conducted research into the edTPA assessment with The Working Group appointed through the Connecticut Legislature. SCALE (2020) claimed that the edTPA assessment evaluates teachers' readiness to teach on their first day of employment, yet there are very few studies that exist which report on the perspectives of this group of new teachers. As Connecticut approaches its second year of high-stakes implementation, this study and others to come in the state can be informative and useful as various stakeholders continue to call for policy reform.

Significance to Social Change

One of the most challenging obstacles for new teachers is transitioning theory-based textbook learning to practical application in a classroom setting. The student teaching experience is designed to lessen that divide between the ivory tower and the real world. Certainly, the mastery of pedagogical knowledge and understanding how to implement research-based teaching strategies are valuable and inherent within EPPs. These are the practical skills evaluated through assessments such as edTPA, and they are essential elements of the preparation process; however, what cannot be overlooked is the need to attend to our candidates' mindfulness of social justice. Borrero (2009) defined social justice as the embodiment of the belief that all students can succeed and that our diversities, be they religious beliefs or the communities and cultures from which students hail, will positively contribute to the learning environment. For novice teachers, social justice is a combination of effective teaching practices and a vision for equity and community participation. It is critical for both teacher candidates and novice teachers to have

access to this combination through their curriculum at EPPs and by way of the mentor and induction programs in their places of employment (Borrero, 2009).

Darling-Hammond, French, and García-Lopez (2002) further the need for promotion of social justice in our EPP curriculum and support that a candidate's vision for social justice must be a key component in the teacher development process. For those called to serve in urban environments or high-poverty areas, a clear vision and plan for implementing that vision is even more essential as a means to ensuring that every child is provided with the educational opportunities he or she deserves (Borrero, 2009). By selecting participants from a variety of ethnicities and gender for this case study, the researcher hoped to provide insight into the ways that the preparation process could be improved to better serve and support all students in our educational system.

Summary

Chapter I of this dissertation provided an introduction to the topic and further developed the topic by including background, purpose, and specific research questions to be explored. An overview of the framework utilized as well as the limitations, delimitations, and assumptions of the researcher were described. Key terms and definitions were provided as a reference to be used throughout the study. Finally, the significance of the study was explained through its contribution to theory, practice, and social change.

In Chapter II, a thorough review of the literature will be provided for the reader, beginning with a more in-depth discussion of the problem and purpose. Theory will be more fully developed so as to better understand the context in which the research questions are framed. The review of literature gives background on teacher evaluation and the evolution of the edTPA

tool that is now used in Connecticut and many other states to evaluate candidates for licensure.

Additionally, two sides of the edTPA coin are explored through those who support it as an evaluative measure and those who oppose it for reasons that include potential biases against candidates of color. Finally, the current state of edTPA and its use in Connecticut is offered as are three dissertations on the edTPA and perceptions of candidates or beginning teachers in states other than Connecticut.

Chapter II

Literature Review

Chapter Organization

Simply utter the word “edTPA” among educators from elementary schools to state capitals, and one will surely be bombarded with strong sentiments and varied viewpoints. This chapter offers a synopsis of the current climate surrounding edTPA implementation beginning with a summary of the research problem, purpose, and questions. A detailed description of the research strategy is provided including the databases utilized and keywords searched based on the different topics within the review. A theoretical foundation and research design model are offered as a lens through which to view the research questions and study. Following that is a brief history of teacher evaluation, which leads to a section on the evolution of the edTPA. The evolution entails a discussion of the Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) and the Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT) because they are early predecessors of the edTPA, which is the focus for this study. A description of the edTPA assessment itself is provided.

The edTPA has been shrouded in controversy as it makes its way across the nation and into the policies of more and more state departments of education. Very little empirical research exists that gives insight into novice teachers' perspectives, which is the focus for this study. However, four recent studies are similar enough to this study to be included as relevant works and provide a look into the minds of in-service teachers who have completed the edTPA in states other than Connecticut. To shed light on some of the arguments for and against, a thorough synthesis of the common themes can be found in sections titled (a.) critiques of the edTPA and

(b.) proponents of the edTPA. These two sections give viewpoints of teacher candidates, preparing institutions, and leading researchers in the field. Lastly, the review concludes with the researcher giving a synopsis of the current political climate in Connecticut, where the edTPA has just become high-stakes for teacher candidates. There is a divided sentiment in the state surrounding the value of the edTPA as an evaluative or educative tool, and so the chapter concludes with a description of the need for this study.

Introduction

Research Problem

In recent decades, a spotlight has been shown on the weaknesses of our educational system from teacher preparation to student achievement. The public demand for greater scrutiny of the teaching profession and the ways in which those individuals are prepared continued to rise. It was almost forty years ago that our nation's educational leaders stated, "Salary, promotion, tenure, and retention decisions should be tied to an effective evaluation system that includes peer review so that superior teachers can be rewarded, average ones encouraged, and poor ones either improved or terminated" (United States National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 35). Decades after this call for action, those ideals became actualized into policy when No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) was signed by President George W. Bush (Moran, 2015). The legislation pushed for a professionalization of teaching and espoused the principle that "every child in America ought to have a well-qualified, fully prepared, and committed teacher" (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2001, p. 11). Policy makers and other education stakeholders demanded an evaluation process for pre-service candidates that was both reliable and objective and spurred the design of better measures that aim to capture the often abstract and elusive nature of teaching and learning (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000; edtpa.aacte.org). Thus, individual

states adopted their own methods for teacher preparation and evaluation including the use of summative portfolio assessments such as the edTPA to prepare candidates for the classroom.

Currently, edTPA is being used by more than 951 educator preparation programs in 41 states and the District of Columbia (edTPA.aacte, 2020). Some states are still exploring its use while others require edTPA as part of program completion or for state licensure, but it is the high stakes label that many state policies have tacked on to the edTPA that has many stakeholders pushing back. Despite objections, the state of Connecticut became the most recent to establish successful completion of edTPA and minimum cut scores for all teacher candidates as an eligibility requirement for initial licensure starting in the academic year 2019–2020.

Purpose Statement

While prior studies have examined the edTPA from various angles, very few and none in Connecticut, have explored in-service teachers' perceptions pertaining to completing the edTPA portfolio. Moreover, there are no studies in the state that explore whether the lessons learned by candidates while going through the edTPA process translate to the classroom once they become professional teachers. The edTPA assessment is touted as the “first nationally accessible teacher performance assessment,” wherein candidates attain the skills to be successful in implementing research-based processes to meet the needs of diverse learners from a variety of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds in any school setting in the U.S. (edtpa.aacte.org, n.d.).

The purpose of this study was to explore perceptions of novice teachers in order to illustrate the ways in which elements of edTPA influence or contribute to current practices, and to understand the efficacy levels of new teachers as a result of experiencing the edTPA portfolio process. It behooves the state of Connecticut to have 360-degree feedback from all stakeholders,

and the voice of recent graduates who passed the edTPA and are now employed is noticeably absent from the literature (North Carolina General Assembly, 2017; Thompson, 2020; Working Group, 2020).

Research Questions

This study addressed gaps in the research and gave voice to those who have first-hand experience with completing the edTPA portfolio in Connecticut by examining the following research questions:

1. What are novice teachers' levels of self-efficacy regarding readiness to teach as measured by the edTPA Teacher Survey?
2. How do novice teachers perceive the edTPA portfolio process as an influence on their professional practices?

Literature Search Strategy

The researcher investigated several databases for this review to examine seminal research that is peer-reviewed, current, relevant, and also to identify potential gaps in the literature. The researcher read recent (in the last five years) dissertations, professional journal articles, published texts, and relevant publications in the field of education related to the topic. The following databases were searched for this review: ProQuest, JSTOR, Academic Search Premier, ERIC (EBSCO), and Google Scholar; and only full-text and scholarly research was utilized from the results lists.

Because this study focused on the edTPA in Connecticut, the researcher limited search terms to include teacher assessment beginning in the state of Connecticut with BEST and tracing the evolution of BEST to PACT and then to edTPA due to the fact that these three performance

assessments were built on one another and closely resemble each other in nature. Search terms used within the databases to gain an historical perspective on relevant recent teacher examinations included: *history of teacher exams; edTPA history; Connecticut BEST assessment; California PACT assessment and implementation*. When researching the beginnings of edTPA and its purpose, implementation, and perspectives of teachers and educator preparation programs, the following terms were inputted: *edTPA and teacher candidate perceptions/novice teacher perceptions; educative and edTPA; edTPA implementation, high-stakes and teacher performance assessment; teacher mentor perceptions/perspectives and edTPA; edTPA coordinator perspectives*.

Finally, in searching databases through the theoretical lens as a means to identify studies that related self-efficacy to success with performance assessments, the researcher used the following: *self-efficacy and edTPA performance; efficacy and performance assessments; student teachers/candidates and self-efficacy; edTPA portfolio*. Results from all searches yielded a variety of perspectives, but the research-base for edTPA as a high-stakes test specifically in Connecticut is extremely limited due to the recent implementation of the assessment for initial licensure. The researcher sought out similar studies to this one, including quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods, in an effort to gain as much background information as possible on the viewpoints of various stakeholders (teacher candidates, edTPA coordinators at preparing institutions, and novice teachers who completed edTPA). At the time of this writing, no studies in Connecticut have been published that explore the perceptions that first and second year teachers have surrounding experiences with the edTPA portfolio as a requirement for licensure in this state. Nor have studies been published that seek to understand whether novice teachers feel the edTPA experience was an effective method for preparing one to be a successful and

confident classroom teacher. This study addressed the gap in the research and provided a voice to novice teachers who are not widely represented among edTPA research.

Theoretical Foundation

Social Learning Theory

The research questions in this study explored how novice teachers perceive their confidence levels related to classroom readiness as a result of having completed the edTPA process. Theory behind this question relies heavily on Albert Bandura's social learning theory. Bandura (1974) proposed that "from observing others, one forms an idea of how certain behavior is performed, and on later occasions the coded information serves as a guide for action" (p. 863). It follows that modeling and incorporation of edTPA tasks by professors in teacher preparation programs and supervising teachers during clinical placement would carry over to the incorporation of those practices by teacher candidates in their own planning and practice once employed.

Social learning theory and situated cognition theory maintain that "learning is inseparable from doing *in situ*; that cognition and learning are processes of enculturation" (Irby et al., 2013, p. 185). The theory claims that

teaching methods should be designed to give students the opportunity to observe, engage in, and invent or discover expert strategies in context. Such an approach will enable students to see how these strategies combine with their factual and conceptual knowledge and how they use a variety of resources in the social and physical environment. (Collins et al., 1991, p. 13)

As such, classrooms in Connecticut's educator preparation programs (EPPs) should have a strong emphasis on modeling the language and the tasks of the edTPA including planning, instruction, and assessment in order to effectively prepare students for the portfolio assessment. Opportunities to engage in the modeled tasks and reflect via group collaboration with classmates would create an impactful learning environment. Taking the concept a step further, the use of the edTPA rubric feedback in a school system setting under the guidance of an experienced teacher mentor would also serve to make the edTPA process a robust and socially embedded learning process for novice teachers. It would be valuable to learn to what extent this theory has been applied in the cases that will be examined in this study.

Social Cognitive Theory of Self-Efficacy

The researcher plans to survey and interview teachers in their first three years of employment as professional teachers in order to glean perceptions as to whether they feel their classroom preparation and clinical placement, specifically in light of edTPA elements, influenced their confidence levels related to professional practice. Theory framing this question relies again on Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is one's belief in his or her own ability to meet challenges and achieve or attain outcomes (Akhtar, 2008; Bandura, 1997). Specifically, Bandura (1986) defined perceived self-efficacy as "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances. It is concerned not with the skills one has but with the judgments of what one can do with whatever skills one possesses" (p. 391). Thus, self-efficacy is not a general idea, but a personal perception related to specific circumstances influenced by several different factors. Tsui (2018) pointed out "a teacher's self-efficacy is a belief about one's capability to impact his or her students' motivation and achievement. These efficacy beliefs are

related to the amount of effort teachers are willing to invest, the expectations they hold, and their perseverance against setbacks” (p. 106). Anderson (1994) agreed and accentuated the notion, stating, “It is important to remember that it is the cognitive processing of efficacy information, not the information per se, that determines the resultant efficacy. Cues and rules for interpreting and integrating efficacy information are learned” (p. 13). It follows that, to a certain extent, the terms and the context in which the edTPA assessment is presented, modeled, and discussed among professors and candidates in teacher preparation classrooms will play a role in a students’ efficacy perceptions and resulting successes or lack thereof.

Bandura (1997) described two components of self-efficacy: efficacy expectation and outcome expectancy. Efficacy expectation is defined as one’s belief in one’s knowledge, ability, and skills to successfully navigate a situation in order to achieve the desired outcome; whereas, outcome expectancy is one’s belief that a given behavior or action will lead to the expected outcome (Gavora, 2010). Thus, for a teacher to be successful, one must possess high levels of both components. Gavora (2010) noted that if a teacher has high efficacy expectations but does not possess high outcome expectancy, then “it is unlikely that the teacher will be successful even if the teacher is professionally well-qualified” (p. 18). Again, the implications for EPPS are evident in that the importance of emphasizing key elements of teacher efficacy early in the candidate’s program will have a positive influence on candidate’s outcome expectancy and ultimate performance.

Sources of Self-Efficacy Beliefs

It is helpful to understand how one’s self-efficacy beliefs are molded as these beliefs influence thought patterns and emotions, which in turn enable or inhibit actions (Gavora, 2010). Bandura’s theory (1977) proposed four sources of teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs: (1) mastery

experiences, (2) vicarious experiences, (3) verbal persuasion, and (4) physiological arousal.

Mastery experiences are the most influential and include scenarios wherein one effectively completes an authentic exercise and so feels more successful as a result. On the contrary, failure in the exercise has a negative efficacy impact; yet failures that produce increased or redirected efforts and ultimate success are efficacious. Mastery experiences result in the most powerful and generalizable self-efficacy. Bandura highlights this point by noting “enacted mastery (teaching) experiences are the most influential source of self-efficacy information because they provide the most authentic evidence of whether one can muster whatever it takes to succeed. Success builds a robust belief in one’s personal efficacy” (Bandura, 1997, p. 80).

Vicarious and verbal experiences are somewhat less effective than mastery due to the fact that the individual is not performing the task oneself, but rather basing judgments on observation of others’ perceived success or failure with a task and transferring that to oneself. However, they do result in attempts and solid effort when the tasks are deemed authentic and realistic (Bandura 1997). In sum, teachers can learn to be effective by observing the actions and behaviors of other teachers being effective.

A third type of experience is social persuasion. This occurs when mentors, superiors, or master teachers provide encouragement to the novice and reinforce the idea that the novice can be successful (Bandura, 1997; Gavora, 2010). These scenarios occur through coaching experiences, professional feedback, or emotional support and serve to build teachers’ self-efficacy.

Lastly, physiological symptoms and emotional states of the teacher influence self-efficacy judgments. Physiological symptoms typically associated with unpleasant circumstances such as headaches, anxiety, or fatigue can result when one feels underprepared or anxious to

perform the task and can have a debilitating result on efficacy (Anderson, 1994; Bandura, 1977; Pajares, 2002). Conversely, a teacher's excitement or enthusiasm can provide cues about anticipated instructional scenarios and subsequent successful outcomes (Bandura, 1997; Gavora, 2010).

Clinical placement and the inherent opportunities for teacher candidates to engage in authentic practice is certainly an example of a mastery experience. Candidates are performing real-time tasks aligned with the edTPA assessment tasks of planning, instruction, and assessment in the classroom setting. Through analysis of the data collected in this study, this researcher proposes to identify what sort of self-efficacy building experiences participants had and whether these experiences influence teachers' efficacy as indicated on survey results and the qualitative data.

Studies Utilizing the Self-Efficacy Theory

Albert Bandura has long been credited with originating the concept of self-efficacy and with the development of a tool to measure it (Bandura, 1997; Gavora, 2010). Teacher self-efficacy is one's perceived belief in one's ability to effectively and efficiently plan, instruct, and assess students; moreover, teachers' self-efficacy and level of perseverance are mutually symbiotic (Gavora, 2010; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Yet how can one measure such an abstract concept?

Using Bandura's framework, Gibson and Dembo (1984) first attempted to do so with their instrument, the Teacher Efficacy Scale (TES), designed specifically for measuring teacher self-efficacy and not just the broader self-efficacy concept unrelated to the teaching profession. This tool was developed and validated using in-service primary teachers and consists of 30

statements about different teaching situations (Bjerke & Eriksen, 2016). The Likert-type six-point response scale, ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree,” asks respondents to rate themselves on two dimensions: personal teaching efficacy and general teaching efficacy (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). In an effort to obtain greater specificity and using the framework of Bandura’s social learning theory, Riggs and Enochs (1990) later developed an instrument, Science Teaching Efficacy Belief Instrument (STEBI-A), to measure the efficacy beliefs of elementary teachers of science (Bjerke & Eriksen, 2016; Gamborg et al., 2018). The STEBI denotes self-efficacy on two sub-scales as a measure of personal teaching efficacy and teaching outcome expectancies. Respondents rate themselves on questions within the two subscales by using Likert-scale items on a five-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Though this instrument was designed specifically for teachers of science, there is precedent from many researchers that extends the use of this instrument to various grade levels and content areas (Gamborg et al., 2018).

Roofe and Miller (2013) utilized the self-efficacy theory as a framework for their study at a Jamaican teacher-preparation program, and they noted that

according to Bandura (1993) teachers’ beliefs in their personal self-efficacy to motivate and promote learning affect the types of academic environments they create and the level of academic achievement of their students. Consequently, the presence of positive self-efficacy could have lasting benefits for an education system while the absence of positive self-efficacy could have a negative impact. (p. 2).

This has implications for pre-service teacher programs and indicates that attention must be given to cultivating students’ ideals of readiness and effectiveness, as the theory has been proven to be a reliable predictor of behavioral results (Pajares, 2002). A 2005 study by Hoy and Serio

measured changes in teacher efficacy from pre-service through one year of professional teaching using quantitative assessments of efficacy including Gibson and Dembo's Teacher Efficacy Scale. They found that efficacy improved significantly during student teaching but declined rapidly during the first-year of instruction due to a lack of support received suggesting that the feedback from edTPA scorers and the ways in which school districts utilize edTPA results with novice teachers will play a role in teachers' feelings of success in the classroom throughout the first two years.

The theory and its premises have implications for and offer direction to teacher-preparation programs and candidates therein. Primarily, that what is presented in the classroom is influenced by and filtered through one's previously learned experiences. An individual's cognitive and emotional processing of events plays a large part in what is taken away from the experience. Furthermore, individuals in teacher preparation programs come to those with their own personal experiences in the educational system and those may have been exceptional, traumatic or somewhere in between. Those experiences shape thoughts, expectations, and ultimately efficacy within the teacher preparation program itself. In light of these factors, Anderson (1994) suggested that a framework for thinking and learning about teaching be utilized within higher education teacher preparation programs to provide a common ground for students coming from various experiences, and perhaps the edTPA with its research-based and nationally recognized status could fill that void and serve to level the playing field of experiences for students in educator preparation programs.

Cognitive Apprenticeship Theory

McLellan (1996) held that the principles of situated learning theory and the practices of meaningful and authentic learning experiences should heavily inform how we ultimately design

and implement learning experiences and, of equal importance, the assessments we use to evaluate learning. Frameworks can be essential to creating a shared language and common learning experience within an authentic educational setting. The theory of cognitive apprenticeship is an approach that warrants discussion as it aligns nicely with mastery experiences described within the self-efficacy theory, and it is also drawn from social learning theory. Pioneers of the cognitive apprenticeship theory describe it as a model of instruction that works to make thinking visible (Collins et al., 1991). The theory claims that

teaching methods should be designed to give students the opportunity to observe, engage in, and invent or discover expert strategies in context. Such an approach will enable students to see how these strategies combine with their factual and conceptual knowledge and how they use a variety of resources in the social and physical environment. (Collins et al., 1991, p. 13)

The final clinical placement in a candidate's preparation program is the stage on which this theory plays out.

Many are familiar with the traditional idea of apprenticeship learning wherein a master "models the process of a psychomotor task with a well-structured outcome, and then coaches the apprentice through accomplishment of the same task while eventually fading the master's presence from the apprentice's work over time" (Larsen, 2015, p. 11). Traditional apprenticeships are considered one of the oldest models of situated learning or learning by doing; cognitive apprenticeship is the modern-day version of this age-old approach and incorporates the familiar modeling, coaching, and fading approach. A primary difference is that with cognitive apprenticeships, the learner is tasked with accomplishing cognitive and affective processing of complex problems with indefinite and manifold results, such as teaching, rather than physical

skills and methods (Collins, Brown, & Newman, 1989; Jonassen & Hernandez-Serrano, 2002; Jonassen, 2011; Lajoie, 2009; Larsen, 2015).

Cognitive apprenticeship theory distinguishes itself from other social learning theories by focusing on teaching methods that include modeling, coaching, scaffolding, articulation, reflection, and exploration. Table 1.1 offers definitions of these terms as they are an essential part of understanding the theory. As Dennen (2003) pointed out, it is important to “note that these strategies refer to the teacher’s or expert’s actions; the learners in a cognitive apprenticeship are engaged in acts of observation, practice, and reflection” (p. 815).

Table 1.1

Cognitive Apprenticeship Model: Teaching methods defined

Modeling	teacher performs a task so students can observe
Coaching	teacher observes and facilitates while students perform a task
Scaffolding	teacher provides supports to help the student perform a task
Articulation	teacher encourages students to verbalize their knowledge and thinking
Reflection	teacher enables students to compare their performance with other
Exploration	teacher invites students to pose and solve their own problems

Note. Collins, Brown, & Holum, 1991

Collins et al. (1991) explain the specific teaching strategies in greater detail and illustrate for the reader how the modeling, coaching, and fading approach ties into the methods. The core

of the model revolves around the modeling, coaching and scaffolding. Through the process of guided practice and observation, students are expected to acquire a toolbox of skills from which they can draw in the moment. Articulation and reflection are paired together and aim toward strengthening and focusing students' problem-solving strategies through a honed observation of the expert or master. Lastly, exploration is where the fading process comes into play and is geared toward students' increasing autonomy. Collins et al. (1991) described the goal of exploration "not only as encouraging learner autonomy in carrying out expert problem-solving processes but also in defining or formulating the problems to be solved" (p. 13).

Others have used the cognitive apprenticeship model as a framework for studies into teaching and instruction. Larsen (2015) investigated leadership education using a cognitive apprenticeship framework to examine the instructional methods of modeling, coaching, and fading in the context of how learners experience the model with the goal of informing educators, instructional designers, and higher educational institutions. Cooper (2015) similarly used a cognitive apprenticeship framework as a foundational model for instructional coaching to potentially increase efficacy beliefs in science education. Both found positive correlations between the instructional methods supported in the framework and increased efficacy and effective instructional practices among participants in the studies. Educator preparation programs are inherently aligned to the cognitive apprenticeship model as they are tasked with teaching candidates how to teach through a process of classroom learning and discussion, modeling and reflection, guided practice with constructive feedback, and ultimately independent practice during clinical placement. Moreover, the model embeds the four sources of efficacy (mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological arousal) within the various learning experiences that candidates encounter.

At its core, constructivist theory is built on a learning by doing or apprenticeship concept. Under the wing of a mentor teacher, candidates engage in authentic classroom experiences while completing the edTPA portfolio and learn the most effective teaching practices first-hand. Do the tenets of effective teaching and best practices that are the basis for the edTPA assessment and learned during a candidate's student teaching, transfer to their own classrooms once candidates are employed? The cognitive apprenticeship theory offers an additional lens through which this researcher can explore teachers' perceptions of this. The gradual release method that is embedded within the theory and culminates in mastery experiences during student teaching, seems likely to have a positive and lasting effect on candidates who later become classroom teachers.

Research Design Model

The design for this research inquiry was a mixed methods case study. Creswell (2015) stated that mixed methods research design is a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and "mixing" quantitative and qualitative research methods in one in order to understand a research problem. The design is most appropriate when the mixing of both data strands will provide a more complete picture of the issue and when one method by itself would not be sufficient to do so (Creswell, 2015). This study was not a truly traditional mixed methods design, yet it included mixed methods characteristics such as the use of two strands of data. By building on the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methods, the researcher intended to illustrate not only the more generalizable survey data but also the real-life experiences of individuals representing diverse backgrounds.

Within the mixed methods case study design, the researcher utilized purposeful sampling to recruit from the defined population. Onwuegbuzie & Collins (2007) defined this strategy as

“choosing settings, groups, and/or individuals representing a sample in two or more stages in which all stages reflect purposive sampling of participants” (p. 287). During the same phase of the process, the researcher sampled for the survey and for the case study, but the case study participants will be sampled so as to most fully represent various viewpoints. This approach creates an opportunity to gain a variety of perspectives from across disciplines, grade levels, gender, culture, or race. Creswell and Poth (2018) pointed out that through multiple sources of data such as observations, interviews, and surveys, the researcher can potentially disentangle the complexity of a situation or lived experiences.

The ontology of a study sought to answer the question of what is the nature of reality? A design utilizing quantitative survey data and qualitative data derived from observations and interviews provides a vehicle for participants' many different views on a subject. The survey data prompted a deductive approach that lets the numbers speak for themselves, yet the subsequent observations and interviews allowed the research to give meat to the bones of the quantitative data. The different views that are collected through the qualitative approaches were reported and analyzed for emergent themes both in common and outlying, as there is a good deal of value in both. The methodology selected for the qualitative strand is “characterized as inductive, emerging, and shaped by the researcher's experience in collecting and analyzing data” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 21). The qualitative strand of the study followed an inductive sequence that evolved as the study progressed rather than adhering to a specific set of pre-determined steps or queries. The semi-structured interview protocol allowed for evolution of the process based on participants' responses, yet this assisted in better understanding the research problem.

Literature Review

Background on Teacher Evaluation

Teacher examinations have long been used as gateways to the profession; however, they were initially comprised primarily of paper and pencil methods, which researchers agree are not comprehensive or predictive enough to ascertain teacher preparedness and highlight a disconnect between testing protocols and real-world application (Darling-Hammond, Aneesh, & Falk, 1995). The report by the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, coupled with the founding of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, among other research findings, informed efforts to professionalize teaching, and institutions of higher education responded by using this knowledge as the foundation for their preparation programs (Darling-Hammond, 2016). Additionally, states began to adapt assessment measures and developed portfolio assessments that examined “expert teaching practice within content areas by examining artifacts of teachers’ planning and teaching and their students’ learning, supported by the teachers’ commentary about that decision” (Darling-Hammond, 2016, p. 87). The edTPA is one such performance-based assessment that requires pre-service teachers to not just master theory, but to also demonstrate learning in order to show their readiness to meet the needs of 21st century learners not only on their *first* day but *every* day of teaching thereafter (SCALE, 2020).

The edTPA website explains that the assessment

is comparable to the licensing exams that demand applications of skills in other professions, such as medical licensing exams, the architecture exam, or the bar exam in law. It is designed to evaluate how teacher candidates plan and teach lessons in ways that

make the content clear and help diverse students learn, assess the effectiveness of their teaching, and adjust teaching as necessary. (edtpa.aacte.org)

The concept of an educator-designed standardized performance assessment that includes authentic tasks to use for evaluation of teacher candidate performance as well as self-assessment of teacher preparation programs has gained favor and momentum among many policy makers, preparing institutions, and leaders in the educational field, who have noted that “by evaluating teaching authentically, they (performance assessments) represent the complexity of teaching and offer standards that can define an expert profession” (Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2013, p. 13).

Evolution of the edTPA

The roots of the current version of the edTPA began in Connecticut with years of data from new teacher induction and the portfolio-based assessments known as Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST), which was a two to three year comprehensive and supportive program used to make second stage licensure decisions. The BEST portfolio assessments required beginning teachers to formulate a content-specific portfolio of their teaching practice focused on a unit of instruction that included lesson plans and supporting commentary, instructional artifacts, teaching videos, samples of evaluated student work, and reflection on their practice (Wilson et al., 2014, p. 4). Raters then scored the portfolio artifacts against Connecticut’s state standards in order to determine whether a teacher would be granted renewable professional license. Across the country, a consortium of twelve teacher education institutions in California collaborated and patterned their creation of the Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT). Like BEST, the PACT also aimed to assess pre-service candidates’ ability to plan, teach, assess, and reflect through the collection and analysis of authentic multi-modal teacher and student artifacts as a means of ascertaining teacher

readiness and state licensure (Hutt et al., 2018; Merino & Pechione, 2013; Pechione & Chung, 2007; Wilson et al., 2014).

Despite the individual state efforts to raise the rigor surrounding teacher preparation, members of the education community in response to federal legislation such as Race to the Top and NCLB believed that a national effort at standardization of expectations for teachers entering the workforce would lead to reformation and increased professionalization (Burns et al., 2015; Sato, 2014). Thus, the Stanford University Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE) and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) developed a partnership to create and implement edTPA (Greenblatt & O'Hara, 2015). The edTPA is aligned to state and national standards and administered during a candidate's final placement.

The edTPA website describes the assessment as a transformative process that requires candidates to actually demonstrate the knowledge and skills required to help all students learn in real classrooms. edTPA is intended to be used as a summative assessment given at the end of an educator preparation program for teacher licensure or certification and to support state and national program accreditation. (SCALE, 2020)

The edTPA is a subject-specific portfolio assessment offered in 27 different certification areas PreK–12 requiring students to plan, instruct, and assess a learning segment ranging from three to five lessons. The learning segment, in most licensure areas, is scored using 15 rubrics with five rubrics designated for use in evaluation of each of the following tasks: Task 1—planning, Task 2—instruction, and Task 3—assessment. The edTPA framework consists of three interrelated tasks with student learning at its core, and the tasks are linked by common academic language all embedded within clinical practice.

Third-party off-site evaluators who are trained by Pearson score candidates' submitted artifacts and commentary for each task, which include: prepared lessons, video uploads of taught lessons, selected instructional materials, student assessments and class work, and the candidate's feedback on student work. The evaluator also considers the candidate's use of academic vocabulary both *with* and *by* students in the classroom, and makes judgments on the candidate's meta-cognitive and self-reflection abilities as a means to inform teaching behaviors (Pecheone & Chung, 2006; SCALE, 2013).

In 2013, after two years of field testing with over 12,000 teacher candidates in 22 states, the edTPA became fully operational and ready for national implementation (edtpa.aacte, 2020). As the edTPA evolved from a state-utilized formative assessment to a nationally recognized tool for summative and evaluative purposes for licensure, its designers at SCALE have remained staunch in their purpose to prompt continual improvement at our nation's teacher education programs and provide a reliable and valid gatekeeping method to the profession (Ledwell & Oyler, 2016; SCALE, 2013).

Novice Teacher Perspectives on Teacher Portfolio Assessments

Since its implementation, the limited research surrounding stakeholders' perceptions of the edTPA preparation and evaluation experience and their viewpoints on the assessment's influence on professional practice has focused primarily on EPPs and teacher candidates as opposed to in-service teachers who have lived the portfolio assessment process. Recently published dissertations and studies have focused on in-service teachers who have experienced the edTPA in states other than Connecticut reveal interesting perspectives.

Campbell et al. (2016)—California

A study by Campbell et al. (2016) examined the PACT, which, as noted previously is a precursor to edTPA and differs only slightly in its design and implementation. PACT utilizes five tasks as opposed to three and delineates those as context, planning, instruction, assessment, and reflection, but the edTPA embeds context and reflection into other tasks; furthermore, PACT assesses using 12 rubrics as opposed to 15. The purpose of this quantitative survey study of 1,000 participants was to examine newly employed teachers' perceptions of the value of TPAs. Campbell et al. (2016) pointed out that during the development of PACT, two perceived benefits of the assessment were highlighted. The first was the value to the preparing institution and faculty of scoring the TPA as a means to inform program improvement. The second perceived value was for teacher candidates and suggested "a candidate in the field would better understand the expectations of teaching by taking the TPA and would improve his or her effectiveness from feedback the candidate received about his or her TPA" (p. 56). It is important to note that these were perceived values, and it was not known to what extent they were applied by EPPs or teacher candidates.

Results of the mixed methods study demonstrated that respondents felt the TPA requirement during their clinical placement took away from the experience as a whole. Additionally, a problematic statistic revealed that the majority of participants never received feedback on their TPA, which makes it very difficult for candidates to enter the workforce with a sense of confidence having no constructive or tangible areas in which to focus developmental efforts. Many candidates reported little value in the TPA process due to the misalignment between program requirements and classroom expectations when employed. A majority of respondents pointed out the overwhelming amount of time associated with the portfolio and the

resulting emotional burdens, anxiety, and stress it caused. Campbell et al. (2017) revealed, “Respondents stated that they felt unprepared for their student teaching, which led to negative experiences, both physical and emotional. One respondent stated, ‘It was a ridiculous exercise in busy work and how much useless paperwork is involved in teaching’” (p. 66).

Positive feedback illustrated the benefits that many candidates saw with the TPA and pointed out a better understanding of the connection between instruction and assessment as well as the growth opportunities that came from reflecting on the video-taped lesson. Others positive responses point to the validity of the TPA. Participants reported that the process gave them a better understanding of the expectations of the teaching profession, and pointed out the value in constant reflection and data analysis on practice. Many of these responses by current teachers, both positive and negative, echo the perspectives shared in this dissertation’s previously outlined studies.

Chatterton (2017)—Illinois

A dissertation employing a phenomenological approach by Chatterton (2017) focused on the experiences of six participants currently employed in Illinois schools who had to complete the edTPA in their EPP and who are also being evaluated with the Danielson Framework in their district of employment. Specifically, the central question addressed was: What are first-year teachers’ perceptions of success? The contextual framework for the study centered on the disconnect between the academic knowledge student acquire in their EPPs and the application of that knowledge during employment. Chatterton (2017) noted that “challenges for first-year teachers are immense and teachers’ perceptions of success vary” (p. 28). To specifically look at the connection between edTPA and perceptions of success, this study reviewed interview data that specifically focused on the edTPA experience and how it related to participants’ current

situation. All cases revealed a strong reflective theme, and participants' desire for feedback both positive or negative. This reflective approach translated to their current practice in that participants felt the feedback would lead to self-improvement and ultimately success in the classroom. Participants associated reflective practices with feelings of being productive and working in the best interest of students' academic, social, and emotional needs. Chatterton (2017) synthesized interview data by stating, "The sense of being productive and confident is self-rewarding, which would lead to perceptions of success" (p. 103).

Valuable feedback from these first-year teachers on how the edTPA could better meet the needs of pre-service teachers indicated that the process must include timely feedback and have a reflective component (Chatterton, 2017). Timely is the key word here. For most, edTPA is strictly a summative assessment with feedback coming from official scorers only after clinical placement is finished, which does not align to how novice teachers are evaluated with the Danielson tool. In the classroom, feedback is formative and can be applied almost immediately to the classroom setting to address setbacks or reinforce that teachers are making good decisions and promoting their feelings of efficacy. Another relevant area of feedback from Chatterton's study related to the vocabulary of both the edTPA and the Danielson Framework. The tools use different terms for the tasks candidates or novices must perform, and this is another area for potential disconnect between university preparation and actual employment. Furthermore, the language used in edTPA is often unfamiliar to cooperating teachers and university professors because the assessment is relatively new and most have not experienced what the current candidates are experiencing creating stumbling blocks in the system.

Ultimately, all participants viewed their first year of teaching as a success and attributed a portion of that feeling to the relationships fostered with administrators, supervisors, mentor

teachers, and colleagues. The ability of novice teachers to maintain a reflective approach and sustain a strong work ethic built on the concept of nurturing the whole-child resulted in feelings of success. Chatterton summarized the findings: “Purposeful evaluations and other feedback that included dialogue and specific relevance were significant in supporting a perception of success” (p. 106).

Seelke (2018)—Maryland

A separate study by Seelke (2018) in Maryland explored 20 novice (having taught between two and six years) secondary math teachers' perceptions of edTPA on their practice using a qualitative approach via interviews with participants. A significant conclusion from the study was that “for nearly three quarters of the participants in this study, edTPA continued to impact their teaching career beyond its role as a summative assessment to determine initial teacher readiness” (p. 109). Further explanation of the results support Pearson's claim that edTPA can be an educative tool (SCALE, 2020). Participants in this study had the opportunity to review their edTPA assessments before the second interview with the researcher. After doing so, almost half of the respondents could point out specific connections between the edTPA commentary or reflection pieces and their current practices related to planning, instruction, and assessment. Furthermore, as noted in Chatterton's (2017) study, the reflective aspect of the edTPA translated directly to their current professional practice.

Seelke (2018) also noted that the edTPA utilizes student-centered best practices, and that the majority of respondents felt that the educative nature of edTPA was influenced by the context in which they were currently employed. The professional development and support offered, though not specifically aligned to the edTPA, promoted a student-centered approach that is embedded in the edTPA vision. Some respondents expressed a desire to replicate Task 2 of the

edTPA, which includes a video-taping and self-reflection, though time constraints in their current teaching position did not allow for it. Still other participants shared that the time-laden tasks of edTPA were idealistic as opposed to realistic and that classroom teachers fall prey to more teacher-centered instructional approaches by default. Seelke does point out that a limitation of the study is that it is impossible to separate the edTPA experience from other components of the educator's preparation and coursework, and so one cannot draw a straight line between edTPA tasks and later classroom implementation, or lack thereof.

Kennedy (2020)—Alabama

This qualitative case study included four pre-service and three in-service teachers, and sought to gain a deeper understanding of teacher candidate and first-year teacher perspectives and experiences related to the edTPA process as a preparation tool for teaching. Data included in this literature review will focus on the three in-service teachers who participated, so as to most closely align to the proposed study.

A relevant theme that emerged from the perspective of the first-year teachers was that the edTPA was beneficial only insofar as a means to certification potentially translating to a standardized certification process that would allow teaching licenses to cover multiple states. Kennedy (2020) hypothesized, "This is most likely due to their descriptions of the lack of alignment between their edTPA requirements and real-life experiences in the classroom in their first year of teaching" (p. 137). There is some indication that novice teachers feel that successful completion of the edTPA is a point of pride and recognition, which could serve teachers well as they apply for positions within their licensing state and potentially when seeking employment outside of the state. The practice of reflection again emerged as a perceived benefit for new teachers. The video-taping of lessons, commentaries, and reflections were cited by participants

as beneficial practices and opportunities for growth that have positively impacted their professional habits.

To paint the most complete picture of the issue of edTPA's influence on various stakeholders, it would be beneficial to go beyond just the perspectives of novice teachers. By including a thorough representation of all sides from critics to champions, the reader can potentially answer some lingering questions as to why the edTPA has received so much press since its implementation in 2012.

Critiques of edTPA

Historically, teacher education reform efforts are slow-moving and met with political and ideological pushback; however, the edTPA caught on quickly and expanded rapidly across the country (Cohen-Vogel & Hunt, 2007; Hutt et al., 2018). Yet this early adoption may now be something some states revisit. Georgia adopted the edTPA as a consequential assessment in 2015 but have since reversed their decision. The state made the edTPA an optional element at EPPs as of July 1, 2020, noting that the decision is part of the state's "streamlining efforts and is aimed at reducing the number of certification assessments required to be a Georgia teacher. The removal of the edTPA and one of the ethics assessments cuts the assessment certification cost for teachers by almost half (48.5%)" (Arthur, 2020). Richard Woods, Georgia's State Superintendent of Schools, echoed this sentiment, stating that "measuring a teacher's preparation and skill is more complicated than a high-stakes assessment tool can capture. The edTPA assessment served a purpose, but it has become clear over time that it caused unintended barriers and burdens for teachers entering the profession" (Will, 2020). While Woods's comments support the idea that the barrier is a financial one, he also seems to hint at other barriers that have limited the professional pool of educators in Georgia. This concern is also voiced by Marsha Francis, site

visitor for the Georgia Professional Standards Commission and former edTPA coordinate at Spelman College, an historically Black college. Francis highlights the importance of rigorous programs that can produce competent and qualified teachers, but also points out that those programs must not be a barrier for first-generation, minority, or financially challenged students (Will, 2020). It remains to be seen what the repercussions of the reversal of edTPA will be at EPPs and among future teachers in the state.

Despite the rapid implementation of the edTPA, more and more studies done in states using edTPA for certification have issued warnings to EPPs, state boards of education, and teacher candidates about the unintended consequences of edTPA implementation, such as marginalizing specific stakeholders who have traditionally been integral to the teacher preparation process. Reagan, Schram, McCurdy, Chang, and Evans (2016) asserted that “findings in the empirical and conceptual literature repeatedly highlight four groups of people who can be simultaneously marginalized and privileged” as a result of implementing a portfolio assessment (p. 310). Those stakeholders are: students, teacher candidates, cooperating teachers, and university supervisors; the conclusions pointed to the perceptions from these key players that “their voices and opinions are not valued in the same way within the context of teacher education as they were prior to the implementation” (Bernard et al., 2019; Reagan et al., 2016, p. 10). An aspect of the edTPA process that intensifies these feelings of disenfranchisement could be the fact that portfolios are scored by Pearson-trained individuals and local control over the scoring is surrendered. Many candidates and EPPs have expressed their discomfort with outside scorers who are unfamiliar with the school setting for student teaching, the values and mission of the preparing institution, the pre-service candidate, and the personalized rubric feedback (Chiu, 2014; Hobbs, 2015; Huston, 2015). At least one study have suggested that this depersonalization

of the process influences candidates' submissions. Huston (2015) revealed that two participants in his study "admitted to tailoring their commentary answers based on the concept of audience, and that their answers did not necessarily reflect what they might consider as best practice" (p. 107). It seems that the most concerning piece for candidates is that their certification is in the hands of a stranger (Hobbs, 2015; Huston, 2015).

Other studies indicate EPPs are emphasizing test preparation over the clinical learning experience by focusing on students' acquisition of edTPA-specific vocabulary, video-taping requirements, or other test-related details. Researchers have suggested that the enormity of the edTPA assessment draws students' attention from the robust and meaningful learning experiences associated with clinical placement, and attention to the edTPA takes away from candidates' hands-on experiences that are the hallmark of the student teaching experience (Burns, Henry, & Lindauer, 2015). Candidates in the programs concur, reporting that they feel unable to successfully meet the requirements of the student teaching experience simultaneously with edTPA and their program coursework (Bernard et al, 2019; Clayton, 2018; Greenblatt & O'Hara, 2015; Hobbs, 2015; Huston, 2015; Lin, 2015).

Moreover, teacher candidates cite frustration with the sheer overwhelming volume of the edTPA manuals, a lack of familiarity with the academic vocabulary specific to the edTPA assessment and divergent from that of the preparing institution, and the redundancy of the tasks within edTPA (Burns et al., 2015; Hobbs, 2015; Huston, 2015; Langlie, 2015; Lin, 2015). A study focused on the perspectives of novice teachers and pre-service teachers in Alabama found that the edTPA, in concert with student teaching, coursework requirements, and personal responsibilities, created improbable demands. Thus, the edTPA caused many teacher candidates and novice teachers to view the experience as a requirement for certification as opposed to an

opportunity for personal growth and associated their clinical placement with feelings of negativity (Huston, 2015; Kennedy, 2020). Certainly, this is an unfortunate outcome that, as Bandura's self-efficacy theory would suggest, could lead to long-term disadvantages for novice teachers in terms of their confidence in the classroom.

Researchers have suggested that in an effort to provide a national assessment that is both valid and reliable, a standardization of teaching practices and pedagogy resulted, which has undermined site-based efforts for more individualized education (Burns et al., 2015; Chiu, 2014; Donovan & Cannon, 2018; Ledwell & Oyler, 2016; Madeloni & Gorwelski, 2013). In the same vein, another unintended consequence is the homogenization of curriculum, resulting in a sidelining of important values in teacher education such as diversity and social justice (Hutt et al., 2016; Ledwell & Oyler, 2016; Williams et al., 2019). Addressing the question of curriculum mainstreaming specifically in New York, Ledwell and Oyler (2016) pointed out that the edTPA is *supposed* to be an agent of curriculum change and that naturally there will be ranges and variations in how the edTPA is integrated into EPPs across the state, which will lead to a range of results, positive or negative, on candidate's edTPA scores. A possibility exists that homogenization is more of an outcome related to EPPs efforts to educate and prepare their candidates for the summative portfolio assessment. Yet detractors have suggested that this "teaching to the test mentality" that is so often vilified in public education is exactly what is happening in teacher education programs, and that misalignment exists between the edTPA tasks and the real-world expectations of the clinical placement (Chiu, 2014; Heil & Berg, 2018; Kennedy, 2020).

Finally, a mixed methods study by Clayton (2018) gave voice to teacher candidates experiencing the edTPA portfolio process, and it seems to sum up the general feelings that cloud

the edTPA experience. The study explored how student teachers experience the edTPA during its implementation as an individual exam for initial certification. Results indicated that edTPA is a better measure of a candidate's ability to negotiate varied and conflicting experiences during clinical placement, more than it is an indicator of a candidate's ability to be an effective teacher. This conclusion is taken from the study, but also from other research by Meuwissen and Choppin (2015) that aligns with Clayton's findings. However, it should be noted that the participants in Clayton's study consisted of only six in-depth interviews, and conclusions were primarily drawn from those, which may have skewed the results. The six interviews were taken from a total sampling of 109, and it does not seem wise to draw sweeping conclusions, yet results do encourage further studies exploring perceptions about the edTPA process and how meaningful it really is for candidates as they enter the workforce. Clayton noted few studies have examined the impact of the exam on teacher candidates and, specifically, the impact it has on the experience of learning to become a teacher (i.e., the clinical placement). This study informs both of those areas insofar as participants will be providing recollections of their edTPA experiences as candidates and how coupling edTPA with their clinical placement may have influenced their current practices.

Claims of edTPA Bias

Determining an instrument's validity begins with identifying the intended purpose of the tool and the constructs being measured (Bell et al., 2012). edTPA was developed to be an "authentic, subject-specific, performance-based support and assessment system of a candidate's initial readiness to teach" (Pechione et al., 2016). According to the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (AERA, APA, & NCME, 2014), a variety of empirical approaches can be used to ascertain whether the test adequately represents the content domain associated

with the occupation or specialty being considered. The edTPA 2016 Administrative Report outlined the content validation process as follows:

The development of the edTPA rubrics was informed by a combination of content validation and job analysis activities and information. The information obtained through these activities is a key contributor to validating edTPA as an effective, authentic instrument that can be used for teacher licensure decisions. The review by teachers and teacher educators provided statistical data to support edTPA as a highly representative tool in measuring candidates' knowledge and skills needed to perform on the job as a novice teacher. The data support edTPA as an evaluation tool for both pedagogical and subject-specific knowledge and skills, which, together with other measures of teacher competence, form the basis of what teacher candidates must possess starting on day one of their professional career. To further support the content validity findings in 2013, a confirmatory job analysis study was conducted to support the job-related validity of edTPA by drawing upon the list of Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs) that were identified by educators, faculty, and subject-matter experts during the edTPA development process. (Pechione et al., 2016, p. 17)

Further validity measures were taken to address construct validity. The edTPA is divided into three tasks addressing planning, instruction, and assessment. Five rubrics measuring each. In 2013, Exploratory Factor Analyses (EFA) of the field test data provided support for the common underlying structure of edTPA that unifies all rubrics and the three-task structure. Confirmatory Factor Analyses (CFA) are conducted annually, "measuring a common unifying teaching construct and that there are three common latent constructs (planning, instruction, and assessment) that are appropriately assessed" (Pechione et al., 2016, p. 19). Predictive validity

must be conducted after the assessment has been established for several years. SCALE is encouraging studies on this topic, yet SCALE cautions the potential to narrow or marginalize effective teaching by failing to acknowledge other measures of effective teaching such as meaningful mentor relationships, teacher evaluation, and culturally relevant pedagogy (Pecheone et al., 2016, p. 21).

SCALE has also published data reporting on demographic factors and their relationship to edTPA performance. It is important to note that only data from states where the assessment is consequential is included in the data collection, analysis, and reporting. Moreover, the disparities in sample sizes within demographic subgroups make it difficult to generalize findings to the national teacher candidate population. SCALE (2016) found that in terms of ethnicity, the breakdown of data for candidates submitting edTPA portfolios were: White (75.39%), followed by Hispanic (7.16%), African American (5.93%), Asian (4.31%), and American Indian or Alaskan (.33%), with 2.84% identifying as Multiracial, 1.31% Other, and 2.73% not identifying ethnicity (Pecheone et al., 2016, p. 30). Again, the researchers advised that due to the disproportionate representation of White candidates and the relatively small sample sizes of other groups, caution must be employed when making comparisons or generalizations. With this warning in mind, the data revealed that average scores for White candidates and Hispanic candidates were identical. While the average scores of African American and American Indian or Alaskan Native candidates was lower than those of other subgroups ($p < .01$), the fact that African American candidates made up a very small portion of the candidate pool (5.93%) and the number for American Indian or Alaskan Native is less than 100 should be noted.

Researchers point out that in the context of assessments focused on evaluating pre-service candidates, edTPA has a smaller achievement gap between scores of White candidates and other

subgroups than other more traditional evaluative measures (Pecheone et al., 2016). Again, the authors encourage state agencies and educational researchers to conduct studies within their own populations so as to contribute to the overall body of research, noting that “edTPA is committed to providing an equitable assessment that is free of bias and adverse impact” (p. 31).

Despite SCALE’s extensive measures in addressing validity, and taking up the call for additional studies, researchers in New York, Connecticut, Washington, and Illinois found that students of color and low-income students have disproportionately higher failure rates on the edTPA than White students; the researchers inferred that the test itself may be racially biased (Bernard et al., 2019; Dover et al., 2015; Goldhaber et al., 2017; Luna, 2016; Williams et al., 2019). Williams, Hart, and Algozzine (2019) recently explored various fixed factors, including race and institutional preparation at a Southeastern urban college of teacher preparation, and found that overall, White students out-performed candidates of color and that these differences were statistically significant. One potential explanation for this finding is that certain students from linguistic or cultural backgrounds may experience difficulty with acquiring and correctly applying the language of the edTPA (Clayton, 2018). Luna (2016) also found evidence to suggest that students from culturally diverse backgrounds face financial, linguistic, and cultural barriers when it comes to edTPA success, noting that the edTPA “gives surface value to diversity and differentiated instruction, but it also limits who gets certified” (p. 446).

Using longitudinal data from Washington state, Goldhaber et al. (2016) conducted a study using candidates’ edTPA scores and aimed at providing “estimates of the extent to which edTPA scores are predictive of the likelihood of entry into the teacher workforce and value-added measures of teacher effectiveness (i.e., predictive validity)” (p. 3). Primary results focused on the 2,362 teacher candidates from Washington State TEPs who took the edTPA in the 2013–

14 school year. Of this total, 60.29% entered the state's public teaching workforce in the 2014–15 school year. Those 1,424 teacher candidates were also linked to information about their school assignments, race, gender, and ethnicity by accessing records of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. The sample size for the subset studied included 277 teachers of reading and math in grades 4–8, allowing the researchers to investigate the relationship between edTPA performance and student achievement (Goldhaber et al., 2016). The authors found that Hispanic teacher candidates scored considerably lower than non-Hispanic White candidates on the edTPA; additionally, once the assessment became high-stakes, Hispanic candidates failed the edTPA at a rate of more than three times more than non-Hispanic White candidates. The researchers claimed that this high rate of failure for Hispanic candidates could negatively affect the diversity of the candidate pool in the state, yet advised the reader of the possibility that these candidates would have been unable to obtain a teaching position for other reasons even in the absence of the edTPA as a consequential exam (Goldhaber et al., 2016). Overall, the predictive validity of the edTPA was supported in the area of reading when cut-scores were used as a means of screening out under-prepared teachers from entering the workforce. However, the same screening effect did not apply for math, which researchers hypothesized may be a side-effect of the edTPA's focus on writing through the commentary and reflection pieces found in the reading assessment (Goldhaber et al., 2016).

In a rather vitriolic article denouncing the widespread use of high-stakes teacher portfolio assessments and the edTPA specifically, Dover and Schultz (2016) cited the illusion of objectivity and rigor surrounding the edTPA. The authors noted that although SCALE claims their assessment has been field tested with over 12,000 candidates, the homogeneous nature of the reported candidates is misleading. The authors revealed that only 3,669 candidates were

included in Pearson's 2013 field test report, and of those, 82% were White and 97% spoke English as a primary language (SCALE, 2013). Furthermore, Dover and Schultz (2016) highlighted the concern that "no data were published regarding the socioeconomic status of field test subjects, the universities they attended, the urbanicity of their student teaching placements, or related scoring trends" (p. 98). The researchers contend that the trend continued with the release of SCALE's 2015 data, which included 18,436 portfolios submitted in 2014. The disaggregated results provided for 11,926 candidates, of which 80% were White and 98% were native speakers of English (SCALE, 2015). Dover and Schultz (2016) claimed that

SCALE's report indicated that there were not significant scoring differentials on the basis of race or student teaching context among this subset of participants, but the report is conspicuous for its exclusion of approximately one third of the data. SCALE has not made the raw data available for independent review, nor published its findings in a peer-reviewed journal. (p. 98)

Pearson answered back in its recent Administrative Report SCALE (2018), noting that analyses on all demographic variables account for less than 3% of the total variance in scores on edTPA. Yet a study by Petchauer, Bowe, and Wilson (2018) examined "what the current body of edTPA research suggests about how the exam might affect the access prospective Black teachers and teachers of color have to the profession" (p. 5). Using the framework of point of obligatory passage, the authors highlighted the adverse impact consequential assessments like the edTPA and prior standardized assessments have had and could continue to have on the "efforts to grow and sustain Black teachers" (Petchauer et al., 2018, p. 16). The authors point out mixed and alarming trends in SCALE's bias reports and call for efforts by Pearson to address the "emergent bias" (p. 16).

In light of the research supporting the potential for cultural, linguistic, or racial bias on the edTPA and the possibility that this bias could impact future diversity amidst the nation's teaching pool, exploration of this topic was included in this study in the hopes that further insight could add to the larger body of research and answer the call for closer examination of the concerns.

Proponents of edTPA

Though there are compelling and serious criticisms about edTPA as a high-stakes summative assessment, there are those stakeholders from policy makers to edTPA coordinators to teacher candidates who tout the benefits as well. Several studies concluded that the experiences shared among candidates have led to feelings of collegiality and collaboration, which foster professionalism and feelings of confidence as students explore, fail, and achieve throughout the portfolio assessment (Lin, 2015). The completion of commentaries associated with each task encourages candidates to reflect on their decision making and teaching in ways that they likely would not have otherwise done; and some candidates reported that as a result of the embedded tasks, they were forced to pause and think about their instructional decisions (Baptiste, 2012; Hobbs, 2015; Lin, 2015; Zhou, 2018).

Additional positive feedback from candidates cited features of the edTPA that led to professional preparation and, consequently, successful employment interviews, a heightened awareness of political and social influences on educational policy and practice, and an appreciation for the use of a common framework, language, and industry expectations in teacher preparation (Baptiste, 2012; Heil & Berg, 2017; Hobbs, 2015; Lin, 2015). Even the video-taping portion of the assessment, which is encompassed in Task 2 and is generally a task met with anxiety by candidates, was reported to have significant short-term and long-term benefits,

including the opportunity to self-evaluate, tweak instructional strategies, and apply this self-analysis approach throughout one's teaching career (Baptiste, 2012; Langlie, 2015, Lin, 2015). Candidates among studies also report an enhanced understanding of effective instructional strategies and best practices across the three tasks of planning, instruction, and assessment (Campbell et al., 2016; Kissau et al., 2019; Seelke, 2020).

Another advantage of having a standardized performance assessment is that those stakeholders who view the world through a positivist lens can take comfort in the idea that knowledge about the "right way to teach" can be "standardized and applied universally" via the edTPA (Wahl, 2016). Therefore, the assessment provides a framework that can be used as a summative and formative tool that informs teaching practices of pre-service and in-service candidates. Furthermore, hiring districts and EPPs are provided with an objective, valid, and reliable tool that measures a candidate's effectiveness while also providing a way for states and preparing institutions therein to evaluate their own program of preparation (edTPA.aacte, 2020; Seelke, 2020; Sherfinski et al., 2019; Wahl, 2016).

Connecticut Educators' Viewpoints on edTPA

Connecticut formed the Educator Preparation Advisory Council (EPAC) in 2012 after state superintendents and the Connecticut School Board of Education voiced concerns about the level of classroom readiness demonstrated by graduates of the state's EPPs. After a four-year study, it was mandated that all educator preparation programs require a third-party to

oversee the implementation of reliable and valid performance-assessment requirements for teacher licensure in Connecticut. By using a performance assessment that was reliable, focused and scored by a third party, Connecticut taxpayers and superintendents

would be more confident that a new teacher, regardless of where he or she was prepared, would be demonstrably ready to enter the classroom upon graduation. (Alfano, 2020).

The edTPA was selected as the performance assessment and was piloted for two years before implementation. In the fall of 2018, edTPA was first mandated without cut-scores in Connecticut, and in 2019 amid a flurry of discourse surrounding the decision, the state of Connecticut made edTPA a consequential assessment and requirement for initial teacher licensure (portal.ct.gov, 2020).

Educational leaders and professors from The University of Connecticut penned a policy paper confronting the edTPA based on experiences from students, faculty, and cooperating teachers. They found a diminishment of candidate learning, perpetuation of inequitable systems for candidates of color and low-income teacher candidates, and an application of developmentally inappropriate standards (Bernard et al., 2019). The authors went on to recommend a reversal or suspension of the implementation of edTPA in Connecticut until resolutions could be developed. The authors emphasized that “in creating a context for excellent schools and teachers, we cannot take shortcuts and must invest the time in creating a more thoughtful and specific assessment that is relevant and meaningful for teacher candidates and their students” (Bernard et al., 2019, p. 13). In spite of the concerns, as of September 1, 2019, Connecticut was counted among the states requiring successful completion of edTPA as an education preparation provider program completion requirement, and the state has taken no action to halt or reverse their position. Shortly thereafter, Pursuant to Public Act No. 19-139, *An Act Concerning Education Issues*, Sec. 3, a Working Group appointed by the Connecticut General Assembly met to study issues related to the implementation of edTPA and issued a final report on January 31, 2020.

The Working Group was charged with examining five queries noted in the statute related to edTPA, as well as drawing conclusions and issuing recommendations. The central themes for investigation included: edTPA implementation in teacher preparation programs in CT, financial costs associated with edTPA for EPPs and candidates, whether edTPA is evidence-based or best practice, whether other states are using edTPA similarly, and any effects on world language instruction. The Group found that confusion and anxiety surround many candidates' clinical experience and concurrent edTPA requirements, that EPPs are at various stages of staff training and implementation into their curricula, and that a portion of faculty raise questions about validity and reliability of the tool as a means for measuring candidate readiness to teach; moreover, a portion of CT's teacher candidates suffer the consequences of the uneven integration. Furthermore, there is evidence that edTPA implementation has "consumed financial, human and physical resources at Connecticut's EPPs," and Connecticut is now the most expensive state in the region for educator licensure (Working Group, 2020, p. 31).

Many of the Working Group's findings align with concerns raised by the literature, and they made several recommendations to address those. Several financial suggestions were brought forth, ranging from statute changes to reduced certification fees to creating shared resources among EPPs to tackle the challenge collaboratively. They also suggested ongoing monitoring by CSDE of the research on edTPA's validity and reliability and the utilization of an inquiry approach to a review of program coursework and clinical experiences, in order to ascertain strengths and areas for growth in preparing candidates for edTPA. The group also recommended that EPPs reinforce the notion that teaching is hard work, provide practice with the cycle of instruction, and educate candidates (and faculty) on the progression of the rubrics. Finally, the

CSDE should monitor performance based on demographic variables and report annually on pass rates by institution as well as individual candidates' edTPA performance.

The Working Group was appointed to represent the viewpoints of various stakeholders and included a professor in a teacher preparation program in the state, a dean of a teacher preparation program, two students currently enrolled in a teacher program in the state, and a recent graduate of a teacher preparation program in the state, and the Commissioner of Education (or appointee). Interestingly, only one appointed seat of the Working Group remained vacant throughout the study that should have been filled, and that was the seat designated for a recent graduate of an EPP in CT. It seems this obvious gap in representation of such critical stakeholder in the policy process should have been filled before pressing on with the study. Surely the results would have been more robust and more broadly representative. In the end, endorsement of the Working Group's final report yielded four members in favor and two against.

Further adding to the landscape is Connecticut House Bill 5376: *An Act Concerning the Implementation of edTPA as Part of Educator Preparation Programs*. This raised bill proposes that on or after July 1, 2020, the CT Department of Education cease state-wide implementation of edTPA as adopted by SBE on December 7, 2016, and that each EPP develop and administer their own preservice performance assessment. These assessments must be approved by the Commissioner of Education who will also establish a passing score requirement for purposes of professional certification. As recently as March 6, 2020, stakeholders from across the state spoke or wrote in to be heard at the public hearing held at the Connecticut General Assembly. A review of the testimony in support of HB 5376 revealed common themes. These themes include the viewpoint that edTPA is forcing teacher candidates to narrow their student teaching experience and teach to a test that ultimately reveals little to no new information, particularly on classroom

management skills and cultural literacy, which are historically deficient areas for new teachers. Additionally, the clinical experience is being narrowed and candidates are overly-stressed by focusing on the edTPA process rather than developing the skills, knowledge, and relationships that are critical for teachers. The financial burden and nature of edTPA is having a disproportionately negative effect on teacher candidates of color and low socio-economic status, perpetuating a system of institutional racism and creating barriers to the teaching profession and deficits in critical areas such as special education, Spanish, and STEM (HB 5376).

Those in opposition to HB 5376 held common beliefs as well, the foremost of which seemed to be the sweeping negative impact on student learning at the classroom level should the edTPA be eliminated. Many pointed out the financial burden on already strapped EPPs who would have to create their own performance assessment if the bill is enacted. Dr. Miguel Cardona, Commissioner of Education, stated that the CBE lacked the capacity to review and approve the potential assessments from each EPP, which is written in under Section 2(b.) of the bill. Others highlighted the inconsistencies that individual assessments at each EPP would create relative to a candidate's ability to teach, which would trickle down to disparity in students' ability to learn. Moreover, individual performance assessments could not be counted on to be valid and reliable, which again would increase variability across EPPs and leave the state and its agents without a standardized method to compare candidate's effectiveness (HB 5376).

Summary

Based on the testimony reviewed, there appears a fairly clear line, with few exceptions, between the stakeholders in support and those in opposition to HB 5376. Those in support bear the roles of the rank and file educators: teacher candidates in EPPs across CT, faculty in those same programs, cooperating teachers and mentors within the state's public-school systems, and

representatives/leaders of the teachers' associations. Those opposed seem to be in positions of relative power in the state: Connecticut's Commissioner of Education, the Executive Director of the CT Association of School Superintendents, an edTPA coordinator/certification officer, and the Executive Director and policy advocate for Ready CT, a non-profit affiliate of CT Business and Industry Association (CBIA).

There is a growing body of differing perspectives that populates the research surrounding the efficacy of edTPA as a summative assessment and its value for candidates in their post-certification employment. A deep-dive into the perceptions of those living the process first-hand is warranted, particularly in Connecticut, where the assessment is in its first-year as a requirement for initial licensure. To their credit, SCALE (2019) has provided several layers of support to edTPA coordinators at EPPs for the recommended cycle of edTPA implementation, and even goes so far as to suggest that institutions "customize use of these materials according to their particular needs, in order to develop a meaningful approach to engaging in edTPA that authentically reflects their preparation context" (p. 2). SCALE (2019) outlines steps that include educating and orienting staff at EPPs who will be utilizing the edTPA, exploring ways to embed the assessment in to coursework, and forging relationships between EPPs and P-12 partners to further edTPA discussions and make connections to real-world practice as candidates become employed in the school systems. For those at the state level, SCALE (2019) provides recommendations that stress a need for a low-stakes piloting period wherein faculty have the opportunity to get familiar with the assessment and requirements as they ascertain the best ways in which to incorporate edTPA components into their programs. Of particular interest is the suggestion that candidates have formative opportunities to develop the knowledge and skills

needed to be successful on the edTPA perhaps through extended clinical placement or coursework requiring curriculum planning and authentic evaluation of student work.

SCALE has also created expansive digital resources and literature intended to support both the faculty at EPPs and the candidates as they navigate instruction, implementation, and data analysis as a means for professional growth. Moreover, an annual national edTPA implementation conference is held with the mission of bringing educators together from universities, P–12 schools, and educational and state agencies to generate conversations about implementation and how to best support teacher candidates, build or maintain partnerships, and engage in thoughtful communication surrounding program revision or renewal (edTPA.aacte, 2020).

Still, preparing institutions in the state of Connecticut could certainly benefit from the viewpoints that novice teachers can provide. Their feedback is invaluable for Connecticut EPPs to inform programmatic changes to most effectively customize and contextualize the edTPA tool, thereby furthering the edTPA as an educative process during the program preparation and clinical placement. Educational leaders in the elementary and secondary venue can also find value in the process by listening to the voices of novice teachers who can share perspectives on what districts can do to support new teachers as they transition to the classroom and begin to apply the student-centered philosophy embedded in edTPA.

In her essay on the evolution of research surrounding teacher education, Darling-Hammond (2016) called for studies tapping surveys that provide “student/graduate/employer feedback observations of candidates’ student teaching and later classroom practice” (p. 89). The body of evidence surrounding effective teaching and teacher preparation must continue to grow and serve as a means of stimulating an “inquiry stance” on practices that will lead to continuous

improvement (Darling-Hammond, 2016). By taking an inquiry stance through the use of both survey and case study data, it is this researcher's hope that this study could help to paint a picture of "lessons learned" so as to inform EPPs and state policy-makers regarding the efficacy of the edTPA as a consequential assessment in Connecticut. Furthermore, the case study approach will provide a voice for a faction of educational stakeholders, teacher candidates, and new teachers, who have been under-represented in the edTPA adoption, implementation, and monitoring process in Connecticut. This case study addressed gaps in the research and gave voice to those who have first-hand experience in completing edTPA in Connecticut by examining the following research questions:

1. What are novice teachers' levels of self-efficacy regarding readiness to teach as measured by the edTPA Teacher Survey?
2. How do novice teachers perceive the edTPA portfolio process as an influence on their professional practices?

Chapter III

Method

Williams et al. (2018) pointed out that “new teachers in the United States enter the workforce lacking the necessary pedagogical knowledge, classroom management techniques, self-efficacy, and cultural competency to facilitate meaningful learning for their students” (p. 120). In response, EPPs continue to seek out methods to improve programming and preparation so as to more adequately equip teacher candidates with the skills necessary to meet the needs of a diverse student body. The edTPA portfolio process is one such way to ascertain whether those program improvements are effective as teachers enter the workforce and the classroom, yet little research can claim to represent the lived experiences of novice classroom teachers who have successfully navigated the edTPA.

While prior studies have examined the efficacy and implementation of edTPA, none in Connecticut have explored the perceptions and experiences of novice teachers particularly in light of whether the edTPA process has long-term value as teachers plan, instruct, and assess on a daily basis. SCALE maintains that as the “first nationally accessible teacher performance assessment,” candidates attain the skills to be successful in implementing research-based processes to meet the needs of diverse learners from a variety of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds in any school setting in the U.S. (edtpa.aacte.org, 2020). This study explored whether those claims can be supported based on the experiences of the participants selected for this research study. The purpose of this study is to describe the perceptions and experiences of new teachers who completed the edTPA for licensure as part of Connecticut’s first cohort under the high-stakes label.

Research Design and Rationale

A synergistic design approach to mixed methods research was described by Hall and Howard (2008) as a dynamic process that equally combines qualitative and quantitative research methods. Though the design for this study is a collective case study, utilizing both types of data provide a combination of structure and flexibility that fits well with problems that require more than one data source to address the research questions. This study fits that model. If the researcher utilized one method alone, there would not be enough data to fully address the research questions. Survey results would provide a broad range and increased number of responses, but would lack the ability to provide the rationale, the why or how, behind the results. Conversely, the interviews and observations to be obtained from the qualitative data cannot be generalized, but they can shine a spotlight on the perspectives and unique experiences of real people who represent the numbers in the quantitative data (Creswell, 2008).

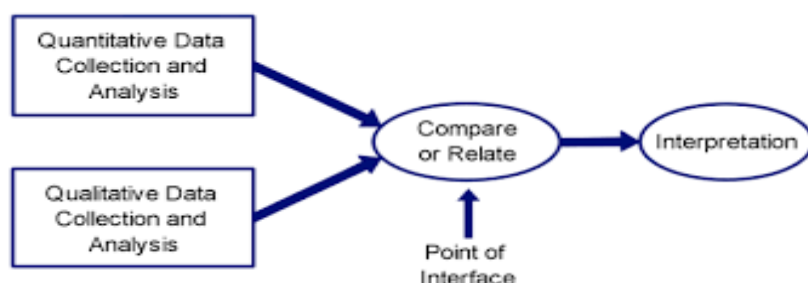
Bryman (2006) described rationales behind why a research would select a mixed methods design. The most pertinent of those to this study include: triangulation, completeness, offset, context, and sampling. Triangulation means that through the combination of both types of data, results can be mutually corroborated. Bryman (2006) explained completeness as “the notion that the researcher can bring together a more comprehensive account of the area of enquiry” (p. 106). Offsetting the data refers to the idea that the researcher is drawing on the strengths of each type of research in order to downplay or offset the drawbacks. Context is simply the use of qualitative data to provide context or greater understanding of the quantitative results uncovered through the survey (Bryman, 2006). Finally, sampling is described as using one approach to facilitate the sampling of respondents or cases, so in this study, the sample was derived from the total

population of students who graduated from the institution's graduate school of education in or after the fall of 2018 who were employed as full-time teaching professionals in Connecticut.

Creswell (2008) pointed out that there are four considerations regarding the qualitative and quantitative data that the researcher must consider once mixed methods has been selected. Those components—interaction, priority, timing, and mixing—then aid in determining the more specific approach within the mixed methods model. For this study, the interaction of the qualitative and quantitative strands were independent and thus only mixed during the final interpretation. Both data played equal parts in addressing the research questions, with neither taking precedence over the other; rather, both informed the study in ways unique to the strand. The timing of the research was concurrent with both strands of data collected during a single phase. Finally, the data were merged during interpretation only after the research had been collected and analyzed separately, thereby offering a point at which the synthesis of the two strands could occur (Creswell, 2008). In view of each of these four considerations, the appropriate design for this study was a convergent parallel design as depicted in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1

The Convergent Parallel Design



Note. Adapted from Types of mixed methods design; Convergent Parallel Design based on J. Creswell & V. Clark-Plano, 2011. Copyright 2011 by Sage.

A core assumption of the convergent (or parallel or concurrent) design is that the resulting data from both the qualitative and quantitative strands serve to provide different results that can be used to offset or check one another (Creswell, 2015). This design calls for the researcher to gather qualitative and quantitative data concurrently, or in the same phase of the study, then to separately analyze the results before making an interpretation as to whether the data sets support or diverge (Creswell, 2015). This design differs from other mixed methods designs such as the explanatory or exploratory sequential designs in that a convergent model does not use one strand and its interpretation of that data to prompt the collection and analysis of further quantitative or qualitative data (Creswell, 2015).

The convergent or parallel design offers both strengths and weaknesses. The strength of the model lies in the advantage of having qualitative data to provide information on setting or context while the quantitative data creates an opening for generalizability. The inherent challenges of the convergent design are how to merge the data for interpretation and analysis, and subsequently how to assess and explain results that diverge (Creswell, 2015).

Role of the Researcher

The perspective of epistemological constructivism maintains that the world is not an objective reality. Rather, the world is from our own construction and, as such, there can be no absolute truths (Maxwell, 2013). Social constructivists seek to understand the world in which they live, play, and work. This researcher embraces this worldview with the goal of harvesting the many and varied experiences and perceptions of individuals. Doing so equips one with the ability to induce a working theory or pattern that creates meaning and shared reality (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Many would agree that our understanding of the world in which we live is derived primarily from one's own assumptions, social interactions, upbringing, and constructions;

consequently, few of those can be considered black and white truths (Maxwell, 2013). This worldview relies heavily on those subjective experiences to derive meaning. Keeping the tenets of this ontology in mind and acknowledging that perception is reality, this study sought to understand the constructed realities of participants' in relation to their edTPA and teaching preparation and everyday lived experiences.

This researcher has had a long history in the educational field, with roles including classroom teacher, coach, reading specialist, school administrator, and adjunct professor to undergraduates and graduate students who were teacher candidates experiencing the edTPA. The researcher has constructed her own reality and assumptions in light of those experiences as they relate to the research proposed. Maxwell (2013) noted that when students ignore the wisdom and knowledge gained from personal experiences when writing papers, they impair their own ability to gain a thorough understanding of the issue and call credibility into question. Without a doubt, this researcher's experiences have colored the design and direction of this mixed methods research and, in fact, have been the impetus for it. However, Maxwell (2013) cautioned that "separating your research from other aspects of your life cuts you off from a major source of insights, hypotheses, and validity checks" (p. 45). This researcher's role varied based on the strand of data collected. The role during the quantitative or survey data collection was essentially non-existent. The instrument was the survey itself, and the analysis was done through software. However, in the qualitative strand of data collection and analysis, the role of this researcher was slightly more involved, though still etic to the extent possible. Because the instrument for collection is a human one, naturally there was some personal involvement and potential bias as described above. Yet, the researcher remained an objective viewer as opposed to a participant in

the process and utilized the member checking strategy to reduce or eliminate bias (Creswell, 2015).

The goal of constructivists is to sew together the quilt from the patches of our individual realities and provide the narrative to the patterns that result. This cannot be done in a vacuum. The axiology of this approach acknowledges the inherent biases and the values of the researcher and participants and permits the researcher and participant to negotiate their shared interpretations by using a methodology that incorporates quantitative and qualitative methods.

Methodology

The study utilized a collective case study design comprised of survey data, document analysis, and semi-structured interviews. This study sought to address gaps in the research and give voice to those who have first-hand experience in completing edTPA requirements in Connecticut by examining the following research questions:

1. What are novice teachers' levels of self-efficacy regarding readiness to teach as measured by the edTPA Teacher Survey?
2. How do novice teachers perceive the edTPA portfolio process as an influence on their professional practices?

Figure 3.2 illustrates this design, which is focused on filling the gaps in the existing body of literature by addressing the research questions and the goals of the study. The study aimed to provide a platform for sharing perspectives of novice teachers in a state where the edTPA has recently become a high stakes tool for teacher licensure. The researcher further intended to provide an understanding of the confidence ratings, or efficacy, that new teachers hold as a result

of their experiences at their Educator Preparation Programs, which use the edTPA as an evaluative tool. Using social constructivist and self-efficacy theory as frameworks, the resulting data should serve to enhance the study and add further validity to the results.

Figure 3.2

Research Design Model: Exploring Novice Teachers' Perceptions



Note. Concept map adapted from J. Maxwell, 2013, p. 5. Copyright 2013 by Sage.

Population

The selected university for the study was a private four-year institution located in an urban area of the Northeast about 90 minutes from New York City. The institution's website indicates that the student body and faculty represent a diverse population hailing from 45 different states and 80 countries. A total of 4,615 undergraduate and graduate students attend the university with 40% of that number representing the graduate population. The university has been implementing edTPA into their educator preparation program since the fall of 2018. The breadth and depth of that implementation has grown over time as faculty has become more knowledgeable about the edTPA.

The target population for the quantitative strand of the study was students who graduated from the graduate school of education at the selected institution and successfully completed the edTPA portfolio preparation for licensure or who accepted the state waiver, but who now have obtained an initial Connecticut teaching license and are teaching in a Connecticut school. The population focused on students who graduated after the fall semester of 2018 through the spring of 2020, and who were currently employed as teaching professionals in a Connecticut school. The total population size fitting the description was 119. It is important to note that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, achieving the mandatory cut-scores on edTPA was waived for applicants from the spring of 2020. The study was limited to novice teachers who were employed as teachers *and* who completed the edTPA preparation at their EPP as part of their licensure requirements. Teacher candidates from the spring of 2020 who accepted the state waiver on edTPA and did not officially submit the assessment were also considered for the study since they completed all of the EPP's edTPA portfolio requirements during their clinical placement and received their initial teaching license.

Sampling Procedures

According to case study methodology, the researcher utilized a nonprobability sampling approach known as purposeful sampling. There is a great deal of research outlining the techniques and principles of purposeful sampling, which was used to identify the most information rich participants within the boundaries of study who will be willing and available to offer reflective and thoughtful insights (Bernard, 2002; Palinkas et al., 2016; Patton, 2002). The researcher only reached out to individuals who are known to fit within the guidelines of the study.

Potential participants were identified through institutional data provided from the site of the study and accessed with permission of the Director of Education and Director of Accreditation at the selected university. This database, which is provided by the State of Connecticut, indicated graduates beginning with the fall semester of 2018 through the spring of 2020 who were currently employed as educators in the state of Connecticut. The database contained area of certification and school district of employment. To maintain the privacy of potential participants, the Director of Education sent an email on behalf of the researcher to the 119 individuals in the database requesting permission to share their personal email. Those who agreed had their email forwarded to the researcher. The researcher then sent the informed consent documents (Appendix E) to respondents. Those who signed and returned were then linked to the teacher survey in a Google form, an interview was scheduled, and a lesson plan requested. For the qualitative strand of the study, which includes the lesson plan review and interviews, the researcher followed Yin's (2014) guidance, which suggested an appropriate range for case study research is between eight and 12 participants because this enabled the researcher to gain robust descriptions of the participants' experiences while also maintaining manageability

of the data analysis given its in-depth nature. The researcher ultimately secured ten participants who participated in all aspects of the study.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Sources and Collection

Quantitative Data Sources

In order to recruit participants, the researcher utilized the employment database provided by the state to the Director of Education at the target institution. All graduates who met the guidelines of the study were contacted through email by the Director with an invitation to participate. The invitation included a description of the study, its purpose, and a request to share personal email addresses with the researcher. Those who agreed to share their email were then put in contact with the researcher. The researcher emailed those individuals and conveyed her gratitude at their willingness to participate and attached the informed consent documents to be signed (Appendix E). Once participants completed and returned the informed consent document to the researcher, they were sent the link to the edTPA Teacher Survey (Appendix A).

Qualitative Data Sources

Initially, the researcher had hoped to utilize purposeful sampling to identify eight to twelve individuals for the collective case study who would be drawn from various ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, gender orientations, and certification areas. However, after multiple email efforts to the population of 119, only ten individuals consented to the study. Thus, the researcher decided to use the ten participants for all strands of the data collection process. Despite the limited response, the ten participants were rather diverse in terms of gender, certification area, and ethnicity. A breakdown of this information can be found in Chapter IV.

All participants' information was kept confidential, and their participation remained entirely voluntary throughout the study. As such, they were free to exit the study at any time.

Once informed consent for the case study was on record, the researcher emailed the participants to set up an interview time. Each case also included a review and analysis of a lesson plan of the participant's choosing, and the researcher requested a lesson plan from each participant; however, some participants did not share a lesson plan for various reasons, including the fact that some districts where participants are employed do not require teachers to write lesson plans. The purpose of collecting a lesson plan was to gain a sense of the extent to which the edTPA planning requirements for Task 1 carry over to the classroom once employed. For those who did submit one ($N = 5$), the researcher created a checklist (Appendix B) based on the edTPA rubrics 1–5 (Task 1). The original edTPA rubrics for Task 1 can be found in Appendix C as a reference for how they were adapted. The lesson plans were also considered unstructured text data given that some were written on a template and others jotted in a lesson plan notebook. Consequently, the researcher reviewed this data against the rubric, but also applied the same coding practices as used with the interview data (Creswell, 2015). The checklist and rubrics served as a means to ascertain the extent to which participants were planning for and implementing edTPA student-centered teaching strategies into their classroom instruction. Furthermore, the lesson plan artifact spoke directly to research question two and provided the researcher some insight into participants' perceptions regarding the value and transference of various edTPA components related to Task 1 Planning.

To further explore research question two, the researcher conducted interviews using the semi-structured interview protocol found in Appendix D. The guiding questions were created based on Bandura's social learning and self-efficacy theories that frame this study, themes that

emerged from the literature review, and a broad question that aimed to garner an overall feeling or perception related to the experience. Without leading the participant to a conclusion, the researcher probed the respondents so as to understand the kinds of experiences that he or she had during clinical placement and later analyzed those experiences using Bandura's self-efficacy framework categorizing participants' various experiences by sources of efficacy: mastery, vicarious, social persuasion, physiological/emotional. The reason this was done relates directly to the idea that experiences inform efficacy and the instructional practices a teacher selects (Bandura, 1997; Gavora, 2010).

In an effort to facilitate triangulation, datum was taken from individual survey responses as well and considered in light of the coded interview transcripts and the lesson plan artifact. Participants were also asked to share their edTPA score on both the survey and in the interview. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, four of the participants had opted to waive submission of their portfolio for licensure. It should be noted that all followed the state's guidelines for gaining initial licensure, including meeting cut scores on PRAXIS and all program requirements. Of the six who did submit the edTPA portfolio for licensure, all passed with strong scores on their first submission of the portfolio. The researcher had initially considered using the edTPA score as a data point, yet with only six participants having one to share, it seemed too inconsistent of a measure. The researcher did include a question in the interview related to whether participants felt the number was an accurate indicator of readiness, and the researcher included the edTPA score for those who submitted the portfolio to the state.

Finally, transcripts of the interview notes were sent to participants as a way of member checking to reduce researcher bias and increase the validity of the results (Creswell, 2015). Through member checking, participants had the opportunity to confirm that the transcripts and

field notes created from the interviews were accurate representations of their perspectives (Creswell, 2015). The researcher made adjustments based on participant feedback.

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs

Quantitative Data Sources

The edTPA Teacher Perceptions Survey (DeJarnette, n.d.) was the instrument used to collect quantitative data (see Appendix A). The edTPA Teacher Perceptions Survey was created by the Director of Elementary Education and Accreditation from the University of Bridgeport. Initially, to determine face validity, the survey was provided to education faculty at the same university. Through their review and feedback, revisions were made to the survey. To establish content validity, the instrument was validated using the Lawshe method, a method internationally recognized for determining content validity (Gilbert & Prion, 2016). Twenty-one experts in teacher education reviewed the survey questions and rated each as *essential*, *useful but not essential*, or *not necessary*. The content validity ratio (CVR) was calculated for each item using the formula referenced in the article (Gilbert & Prion, 2016). CVR needs to be above .429 to be considered valid or greater than 51% essential per item. For this survey, each of the items met the threshold with the lowest CVR being 71% for any item. The survey was piloted in the fall of 2019, and it remains unpublished to date.

The survey included demographic questions asking participants to identify their race and gender. With permission, the original survey was modified slightly to include teachers' area of licensure, edTPA score, current teaching assignment, and semester of edTPA completion. The 29-question survey asked respondents to rate each question based on their personal perception of their level of confidence in their ability to conduct specific tasks. Twenty-two of the questions

were categorized under pedagogical knowledge, four questions under knowledge and skills, and three questions fell in the learning environment classification (Appendix A). Operationally defined for this study, pedagogical knowledge is teachers' knowledge of the methods of teaching; knowledge and skills are defined as the content of the discipline; and learning environment is the classroom climate and behavioral support system.

The edTPA is a teacher performance assessment designed to measure whether candidates have mastered the methods and skills, or pedagogy, of teaching. Unlike other teacher licensure assessments such as the PRAXIS, which is an exam designed to measure a level of subject-specific content knowledge, the edTPA reflects the candidates' ability to apply performance skills related to planning, instructing, and assessment in the classroom setting (edTPA.aacte, 2020; ets.org, 2020). Of the 29 questions on the edTPA Teacher Perceptions Survey, 22 focus on teachers' perceptions of their ability to conduct tasks specifically focused on the pedagogical skills assessed by the edTPA. For example, survey question eight asked teachers to respond to how well prepared they felt to plan assessments that effectively monitored student learning. Task 1 Planning Rubric 5 of the edTPA Planning Rubrics used in this study focused on planning assessments to monitor and support student learning. The target, level 3, required that teachers' assessments provided evidence to monitor student use of the essential strategy AND related skills during the learning segment (see Appendix C). Survey question 17 asked teachers to rate how prepared they felt to identify students' assets (prior knowledge) to determine beginning points for instruction. This question is linked directly to Task 1 Planning Rubric 3 of the edTPA Planning Rubrics: Using Knowledge of Students to Inform Teaching and Learning (see Appendix C). The target, level 3, required candidates to justify why learning tasks are appropriate using examples of students' prior academic learning OR personal, cultural, or

community assets. This pattern of connections between the survey questions and the rubrics of the edTPA exists for each of the 22 questions in the pedagogical knowledge category of the perceptions survey.

As an indicator of self-efficacy, participants were asked to rate their confidence level regarding their readiness to teach. Confidence level was operationally defined using a Likert-type scale response on a level 1 to 5 (1 = Not at all confident, 2 = Slightly confident, 3 = Moderately confident, 4 = Pretty confident, 5 = Extremely confident). The dependent variable was identified as teachers' confidence rating. The independent variables to be explored through SPSS analysis of descriptive statistics included pedagogical knowledge, knowledge and skills, and classroom environment. The researcher did not use existing surveys measuring perceptions of efficacy because the researcher sought to measure efficacy as it specifically related to implementing or completing tasks directly linked to edTPA portfolio assessment tasks. DeJarnette (n.d.) created the edTPA Teacher Perceptions Survey specifically to measure the phenomena so the tool was the most appropriate for this study and would most clearly inform research question one.

Qualitative Data Sources

The instrumentation for the qualitative strand of the study followed Yin's (2014) principals for case study data collection, which are a.) use multiple sources of evidence, b.) establish a database, and c.) maintain a chain of evidence. Qualitative evidence was collected through a document review and analysis of a lesson plan submitted by case study participants and contributed to a robust qualitative database. Lesson plan analysis was guided by an observation checklist (Appendix B) adapted from edTPA rubrics 1–5 from the edTPA Handbook related to assessment of teacher instruction (Appendix C). This checklist framed the following

categories taken directly from the rubrics: R1.) Planning for Learning, R2.) Planning to Support Varied Student Learning Needs, R3.) Using Knowledge of Students to Inform Teaching and Learning, R4.) Identifying and Supporting Language Demands, and R5.) Planning Assessments to Monitor and Support Student Learning. Teachers are scored across five levels (1–5), indicating the extent of successful implementation with qualifying descriptions for each level. During the interview with the participants, the researcher and the participant discussed the analysis together to ensure that candidates felt the researcher accurately assessed the lesson plan. This approach provided a means of triangulation through the use of member checking and collaboration, enabling the participants to provide their feedback on the credibility of the findings and the interpretation by the researcher (Creswell, 2018; Maxwell, 2013).

Additional qualitative data stemmed from semi-structured interviews wherein this researcher was the primary tool of instrumentation. These interviews revealed a collection of demographic information, and open-ended questions provided opportunities for participants to share experiences from their own perspective and elaborate on the observation experience. Interviews were conducted via video-conferencing and audio-recorded with participants' consent using QuickTime audio to ensure accurate transcription. Yin (2014) also advised that the researcher take notes during the interviews to record participants' reactions, inflections, facial expressions, researcher impressions, setting, and atmosphere. Yin (2014) further suggested taking these field notes in the moment and adding to them directly after interview completions so that the impressions are fresh. These memos provided another source of information to add to the rich and thick descriptions needed for case study research (Creswell et al., 2007). Member checking assisted the researcher in accurately reporting the perceptions of the participants with the overall goal of this rigorous data collections process being the development of an in-depth

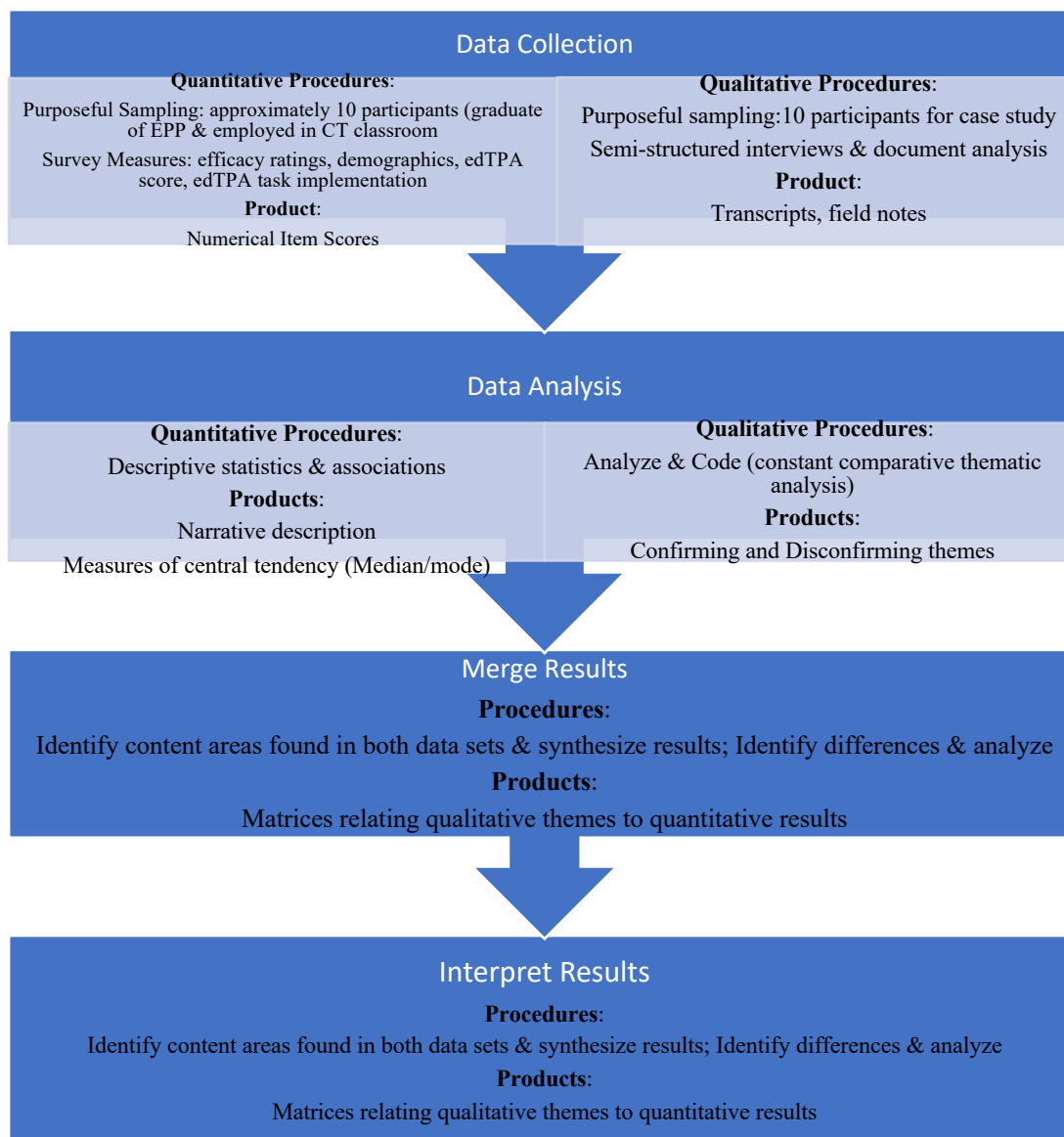
understanding of the individuals' edTPA progression and the context in which he or she experienced it (Creswell, 2018; Maxwell, 2013).

Data Analysis Plan

Mixed methods research has the inherent benefit of providing both depth and breadth to a study by way of the qualitative and quantitative data analysis, respectively (Patton, 2002). Figure 3.3 offers a visual interpretation of the convergent parallel design implementation for this study. Further explanation of the components of the design and the procedural steps follows.

Figure 3.3

Flowchart of the Procedures in Implementing a Convergent Parallel Design



Note: The flowchart is adapted from “Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research” by J. Creswell & V. Clark-Plano, 2011, p. 79. Copyright 2011 by Sage.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Research question one asked: What are novice teachers’ levels of self-efficacy regarding readiness to teach as measured by the edTPA Teacher Survey? By using the edTPA Teacher

Survey, the researcher sought to determine teachers' efficacy related to implementation of instructional practices in three areas: pedagogical knowledge, knowledge and skills, and learning environment. Harpe (2015) pointed out that "numerous rating scales and rubrics have been developed to allow us to derive quantitative measures of non-physical phenomena by combining a set of items asking an individual to make a series of qualitative assessments." Asking participants to evaluate their confidence level on a variety of tasks is one such example of researchers assigning numerical value to cognitive processes. Much debate exists surrounding the best statistical methods for interpreting Likert-type data. In an effort to analyze and interpret results, the researcher turned to recommendations gleaned from the current literature regarding the analyses of rubrics and other rating scales, including Likert scales.

Though numbers assigned to Likert-type data imply a greater than or less than relationship, the degree of difference is not clearly defined. Therefore, the datum falls into the ordinal data scale, and as such, non-parametric data tests were utilized for analysis (Harpe, 2015). In keeping with Likert's initial thinking for the Likert model, the survey was analyzed by describing where data falls within its sub-categories: pedagogical knowledge, knowledge and skills, and learning environment, as opposed to enumerating responses for each survey item. Descriptive statistics, such as measures of central tendency, are used to summarize values on one or more variables for cases within a given data set (Szafran, 2012). Mode and median were calculated for the three sub-scales to identify where the middle score lies for each of the three categories and to identify the most frequently given response rating for each of the three categories. Mean would not be an appropriate calculation, as the Likert ratings should not be averaged; there is no logical middle ground between slightly confident (2) and moderately

confident (3), and a score of 2.5 would be meaningless. Frequency tables were created to illustrate variability of responses in the sub-scales.

The researcher analyzed responses to the 29 questions by identifying the median and mode, in each of the three sub-categories described in order to understand whether teachers demonstrate low (total number of 1 and 2 ratings), moderate (total number of 3 ratings), or high confidence (total number of 4 and 5 ratings) in each category. Harpe (2015) points out that “the phenomenon of interest is measured by the aggregate group of items in the scale, not simply by any one item on its own” (p. 840). In short, the sum is greater than the parts of the whole. Analyzing the data by sub-categories and levels of confidence therein provided the researcher with participants’ levels of efficacy related to readiness to teach in each area.

Qualitative Data Analysis

A document review of a submitted lesson plan was conducted to examine whether participants are applying edTPA elements of instruction in their own planning methods. As noted on their website, “edTPA is not about theory. It goes beyond classroom credits to ask teacher candidates to demonstrate what they can and will do on the job, translating into practice what research shows improves learning” (edTPA.org, n.d.). As such, the analysis focused on whether former candidates who completed the portfolio process were applying the research-based elements of the edTPA to their professional practices. The edTPA utilizes 15 rubrics to evaluate the three separate tasks of the portfolio. The document review focused on Task 1 Planning, and the utilized the checklist (Appendix B) based on the related Task 1 rubrics in Appendix C. The checklist was adapted from the 2018 *edTPA Elementary Education: Literacy with Task 4 Mathematics Assessment Handbook* and in conjunction with rubrics one through five from the

same manual, was an essential piece to help evaluate the lesson and gather data to show which components were applied within the learning segment (aacte.org, 2020).

During the interview with the participants, the researcher and the participant reviewed the analysis together to discuss the extent the candidates felt the researcher accurately assessed the lesson plan. This approach provided a means of triangulation through the use of member checking and collaboration, enabling the participants to provide their feedback on the credibility of the findings and the interpretation by the researcher (Creswell, 2018; Maxwell, 2013).

To add a third dimension to the document review and survey data, semi-structured interviews with the collective case study participants were conducted by Zoom video-conference. Interviews were audio-recorded using QuickTime audio in order to obtain an accurate and complete record. The researcher also took notes during the interviews to enhance the data. The recordings were transcribed verbatim.

For both the document review and interview data, the researcher implemented Creswell's (2015) process for analyzing and interpreting qualitative data. Once the data was prepared for analysis through transcription of the field notes and organized into a matrix by data source, the researcher read through the data. The goal was to get a general sense of the data by asking, "What is this person talking about?" and capturing that meaning in a short phrase or text segment that would later be assigned a particular code (Creswell, 2015). Coding is a recurring process that continues as new data is collected, and each time the data is read, deeper understanding is garnered (Creswell, 2015). Creswell (2015) suggested that once an entire text has been coded, the researcher should re-read with the objective being to reduce the codes to about 25–30 so that eventually, those codes are reduced even further to produce approximately five to seven common themes or categories.

Together, the survey data and the themes that emerged from the document review, and the interviews were compared among all participants to identify commonalities and outliers between the different strands. Responses were viewed through the lenses of the theoretical frameworks outlined in Chapter II of this study. Using situated learning theory and self-efficacy theory, the researcher evaluated the tenets of the frameworks against participant responses as a means of comparing the extent to which they align. Specifically, the researcher examined the *types* (i.e., mastery, vicarious) of efficacy experiences teacher candidates encountered in their clinical placement and program preparation and *how* (i.e., authentic experience, observation) those were provided to candidates to illustrate the ways in which the candidates developed and honed their teaching readiness. The ultimate goal was to understand candidates' self-efficacy related to the edTPA portfolio process and its potential link to successful application of research-based and student-centered practices related to planning, instructional, and assessment.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Threats to Validity

Mixed methods

An important consideration related to validity and specific to mixed methods and case study research stems from sample size. Only descriptive statistics, and no inferential analyses, were utilized in this study. The researcher had to make observations based on a relatively small sample, which can create a crisis of representation (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). Further exacerbating the crisis of representation in the quantitative strand is the fact that the survey participants were not randomly selected. Therefore, results are not generalizable, which speaks to the question of the external validity of the findings (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). In

qualitative research, the crisis of representation refers to the difficulty that researchers have in capturing multi-faceted feelings and perceptions with concrete verbiage. Again, utilizing triangulation, member checking, and being cautious in the recommendations and interpretations can assuage these concerns.

Quantitative Data Sources

The edTPA Teacher Survey relied on participants' self-perceptions of efficacy in completing edTPA-related tasks. Regarding self-reporting as a data collection means, the approach did allow for sampling error in that some information on the questionnaire can be sensitive, which may result in omissions. For example, some participants may have felt less inclined to report gender, race, or other identifying factors. Some may also have been hesitant to reveal their edTPA score or their true perceptions surrounding their experience. In framing the purpose of the study as beneficial to future teacher candidates and by giving participants an outlet to be a part of the improvement process, the researcher hoped to receive fully completed samples. Additionally, the researcher assured the participants that responses would remain confidential with any potential identifying markers removed. The researcher also used pseudonyms to further reduce the potential for a breach of confidentiality.

Qualitative Data Sources

SCALE and Pearson (2019) have conducted extensive research to evaluate the validity of the edTPA assessment. Construct validity was established by synthesizing research from over 200 studies related to the design principles of, foundation for, and the common architecture of the edTPA (SCALE, 2015). The 15 edTPA rubrics were informed by this research. The rubrics, and the observation checklist in Appendix B, reflect the elements of effective instruction and its

underlying constructs (SCALE & Pearson, 2019). This researcher created an observation checklist by taking the same descriptors, rubric categories, and scoring levels from rubrics six through nine and translating them to a user-friendly format for ease of taking field notes and recording data. The content and underlying constructs were not changed for the purposes of the observation.

Further addressing validity and reliability, there are qualitative techniques enumerated by Hagner and Helm (2014) that minimize the threats to both. Among these techniques are prolonged engagement, thick description, search for non-conforming data, member checks, and triangulation. Hagner and Helm (2014) point out that

intensive contact with participants or involvement with a setting over a long time reduces the chance that nonrepresentative events are observed, or that interviewees withhold important information or misrepresent the way things are. Prolonged engagement also builds trust and allows researchers to "fade" to a background presence.

By having multiple points of contacts with participants during interviews and follow-ups, positive relationships can be cultivated that lead to an openness in which participants are willing to share honest and thorough recollections.

Thick descriptions can be gained through in-depth interviews that include "verbatim transcripts of the interviews," which are necessary to provide a "full and revealing picture of what is going on" in order to address threats to validity that could arise from the researcher's own bias (Maxwell, 2012, p. 126). The opportunity for participants to make sense of their experiences throughout the preparation and certification process and the discussion about how or

whether those experiences and perceptions influenced their behavior align with the constructivist approach being taken in the study.

While the researcher coded and explored common themes, the search for disconfirming data was equally important. This idea is analogous to testing the null hypothesis in quantitative analysis (Hagner & Helm, 1994). Yet Hagner and Helm (1994) have cautioned that “one important difference between discrepant case analysis and testing a null hypothesis is that in an inductive study, disconfirming cases are not used simply to rule out hypotheses, but to revise a generalization or model to fit the data better.” The triangulation of the data sources (various artifacts, interviews) and disconfirming data using validation strategies of participant checks and generating a rich description enable transferability of the conclusions to other settings ensure the validity and credibility of the study (Maxwell, 2013).

One additional threat to validity could result from maturation of participants, and the natural effect that time has on one's ability to recall information. The effect of time on one's memory could impact how accurately one is able to recall experiences that may have occurred in the past (Creswell, 2015).

Ethical Considerations

Before any data were collected, the researcher obtained permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure that the study adhered to ethical protection guidelines (Appendix E). The researcher secured participant permission to conduct the survey research as well as the qualitative research and all participants were provided with informed consent paperwork to sign. All were advised that they were under no obligation to participate and could, without

repercussion, terminate their participation in the research at any time. Data is kept in a secure location for five years and will later be destroyed to ensure it is not misappropriated.

Creswell (2015) pointed out an ethical consideration in mixed methods research: the potential of the researcher to group participants from both strands together in ways that may stereotype them. In a study such as this one where an area of interest is on under-represented groups, it is imperative that all individuals are treated with respect. It is essential to interpret the data collected, particularly from the interviews and observations, accurately and in the manner in which it was intended. One way to ensure that the intentions of the participants are correctly conveyed is debriefing through the use of member checking, where the participants are provided copies of the transcripts and given a chance to clarify or correct the researcher's notes (Creswell, 2008).

Interviewing as a data collection process is also a point of ethical consideration. There may be times when participants disclose personal or sensitive information, and interviews can be stressful for participants (Creswell, 2008). The researcher must create a safe and trusting atmosphere where mutual respect and concern is evident. One way to alleviate potential stress is to be certain that identifying markers such as names and locations are replaced with aliases or pseudonyms during data analysis. When coding, recording, and analyzing the strands of data, it is essential to disassociate the participant from the data (Creswell, 2008).

Summary

In this chapter, the researcher provided an overview of a mixed methods study using a parallel convergent design. The study proposed to explore the following two questions: 1.) What are novice teachers' levels of self-efficacy regarding readiness to teach as measured by the

edTPA Teacher Survey? and 2.) How do novice teachers perceive the edTPA process as an influence on their professional practices? The chapter included a description of the researcher's role, an overview of the methodological design, and a rationale for the use of mixed methods case study research. The study's population, sampling and recruiting methods, data collection plan, and instrumentation were described. Threats to validity and ethical considerations were also delineated.

Chapter IV

Results

The purpose of this study was to explore the manner in which the perceptions of novice teachers, who completed the edTPA portfolio process as part of Connecticut's first cohort under the high-stakes label, illustrated the edTPA mission of having teachers fully prepared on day one of teaching. The researcher also sought to understand to what extent engagement in the edTPA portfolio process influences instructional practices of teachers in their day-to-day mission. A collective case study design comprised of survey data, document analysis, and semi-structured interviews was utilized. An examination of the following research questions addressed gaps in the research and gave voice to those with first-hand experience in completing edTPA requirements in Connecticut:

1. What are novice teachers' levels of self-efficacy regarding readiness to teach as measured by the edTPA Teacher Survey?
2. How do novice teachers perceive the edTPA portfolio process as an influence on their professional practices?

Chapter IV will describe the data collection process including the recruitment process and description of participants. The quantitative survey data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and is presented using tables and graphs with accompanying narratives for explanation. The results of the qualitative elements of the study are shared in terms of narratives, quotes from participants' interviews, themes, and discussion. Both strands of data are organized and discussed by the themes that emerged. The data is also discussed through the theoretical

frameworks of self-efficacy and social constructivism. Finally, a response to the research questions will be drawn from the results and summarized for the reader.

Data Collection

The data collection process began at the end of October 2020 after IRB approval was obtained. The Director of Education at the selected university sent an email to 119 individuals who could qualify as potential candidates. The email explained the study and requested permission to share email addresses with the researcher. Those who responded to the Director indicating their willingness to share their email were forwarded to the researcher. Then, the researcher contacted all interested parties and requested them to sign and return informed consent before a link to the teacher survey could be sent and the interview could be scheduled.

Responses were slow and minimal, so the researcher beseeched the Director of Education to send the email to potential participants twice more. By mid-November, ten individuals had signed consent and committed to the study. Though this rate is low, the final number is an acceptable rate for case studies and allows for a range of experiences (see Table 4.1). During the month of November 2020 once consent forms were collected, the researcher had participants complete the survey on GoogleForms and conducted remote interviews via Zoom to avoid individual contact and limit potential spread of infection related to the pandemic resulting from the spread of COVID-19.

The researcher also requested a lesson plan from each participant, which respondents provided via email attachment or text message. Not all participants were willing or able to share a lesson plan, and the researcher indicated as much in the data analysis. Some participants were not required by their employer to provide a lesson plan and others did not submit for personal

reasons. Additionally, not all participants submitted their edTPA portfolio for review by the state. Again, because of the COVID-19 virus, the state of Connecticut issued a waiver for teaching candidates applying for initial licensure in the spring of 2020. The move to remote or hybrid learning that was made to lessen the threat of infection among students made it impossible for all candidates to complete the necessary tasks of the edTPA assessment, specifically Task 2 Planning. Task 2 of edTPA requires candidates to video-tape themselves teaching their planned lesson to a group of students and then reflecting on that experience. Clearly, this was a difficult task to perform without in-person experiences.

Table 4.1*Participant Demographics*

Case	Gender	Ethnicity	Certification Area	edTPA score	CT Passing Score
1	Male	Black	Elem K–6	Waived due to COVID-19	44
2	Female	Black	Elem K–6	55	44
3	Male	White	Music K–12	49	37
4	Male	White	Secondary English	50	37
5	Female	Hispanic	Elem K–6	52	44
6	Female	White	Secondary Biology	49	37
7	Female	White	Secondary Business	Waived due to COVID-19	37
8	Female	White	Elem K–6	53	44
9	Female	White	Elem K–6	Waived due to COVID-19	44
10	Female	White	Secondary Business	Waived due to COVID-19	37

Study Results

Analysis of data for research question one

Research question one posed: What are novice teachers' levels of self-efficacy regarding readiness to teach as measured by the edTPA Teacher Survey? The edTPA Teacher Survey data was analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify the median and mode of participants' responses across the three sub-categories of the survey, which include: pedagogical knowledge, knowledge and skills, and learning environment. Table 4.2 delineates which survey questions informed each of the three sub-categories. Furthermore, to offer some evidence related to a theme in the literature review that indicated assessment inequities related to one's race, gender, socio-economic status, and other areas, the researcher performed analyses within that theme. For each sub-category, the data was calculated to examine whether any associations existed between gender and reported confidence ratings, race and reported confidence ratings, and certification area and reported confidence ratings. For each, a crosstabs analysis was run and is displayed in the subsequent tables and figures.

As a measure of association, Kendall's Tau-b was included for each factor to determine whether a significant association at 0.05 significance level exists between gender and confidence ratings, race and confidence ratings, and certification area and confidence ratings. Kendall's Tau-b Test is a nonparametric measure of the strength and direction of association between two variables (Szafran, 2012). It is appropriate in this instance given that the researcher is using Likert-type data on an ordinal scale and examining potential associations between that data and the three different variables of gender, race, and certification area.

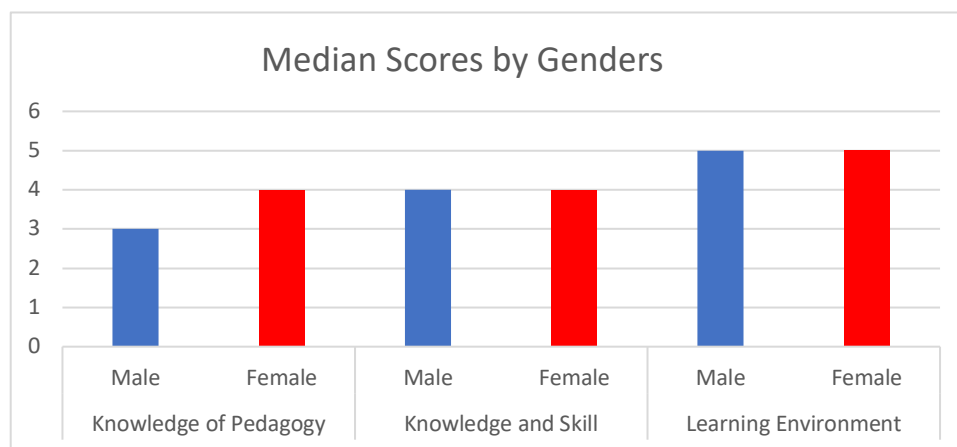
Table 4.2*Breakdown of survey questions by sub-categories.*

Pedagogical Knowledge	Q3, Q4, Q6, Q7, Q8, Q9, Q11, Q12, Q13, Q14, Q15, Q16, Q17, Q18, Q19, Q20, Q21, Q22, Q23, Q24, Q25, Q26
Knowledge and Skills	Q1, Q2, Q10, Q29
Learning Environment	Q5, Q27, Q28

Note. edTPA Teacher Survey items can be referenced in Appendix A.

Comparing the medians of various factors by gender

The three factors considered for analysis were: Pedagogical Knowledge, Knowledge and Skills, and Learning Environment, and the median was calculated in each category. For this Analysis a total of 10 subjects were considered, with three of the subjects being male and seven of the subjects being female. A crosstabs analysis was performed on gender and the three factors, with the outcome indicated in Figure 4.1. Results show that the perception of Knowledge of Pedagogy differs slightly in gender: while most of the males are “Moderately confident,” the females are “Pretty confident.” The perception of remaining factors appeared alike across gender. On considering the “Knowledge and Skills” factor, both the genders perceived it as “Pretty confident,” while they both considered “Learning Environment” as “Extremely confident.” Kendall’s Tau-b Test was run and indicated in Table 4.3; it is evident that the Sig > 0.05 indicates that there is no significant association between gender and knowledge of pedagogy, nor gender and knowledge and skill, nor gender and learning environment.

Figure 4.1*Crosstabs Analysis by Gender*

Note. Likert scale 0–5

Table 4.3*Kendall's Tau-b Tests by Factors*

		Value	Asymptotic Standardized Error ^a	Approximate T ^b	Approximate Significance
Gender vs Knowledge of Pedagogy					
Ordinal by Ordinal	Kendall's tau-b	.283	.337	.815	.415
N of Valid Cases		10			
		Value	Asymptotic Standardized Error ^a	Approximate T ^b	Approximate Significance
Gender vs Knowledge and Skill					
Ordinal by Ordinal	Kendall's tau-b	.036	.343	.104	.917
N of Valid Cases		10			
		Value	Asymptotic Standardized Error ^a	Approximate T ^b	Approximate Significance
Gender vs Learning Environment					
Ordinal by Ordinal	Kendall's tau-b	.137	.344	.386	.699
N of Valid Cases		10			

Note. N represents number.

*Sig > 0.05 for all tests

Comparing the medians of various factors by race

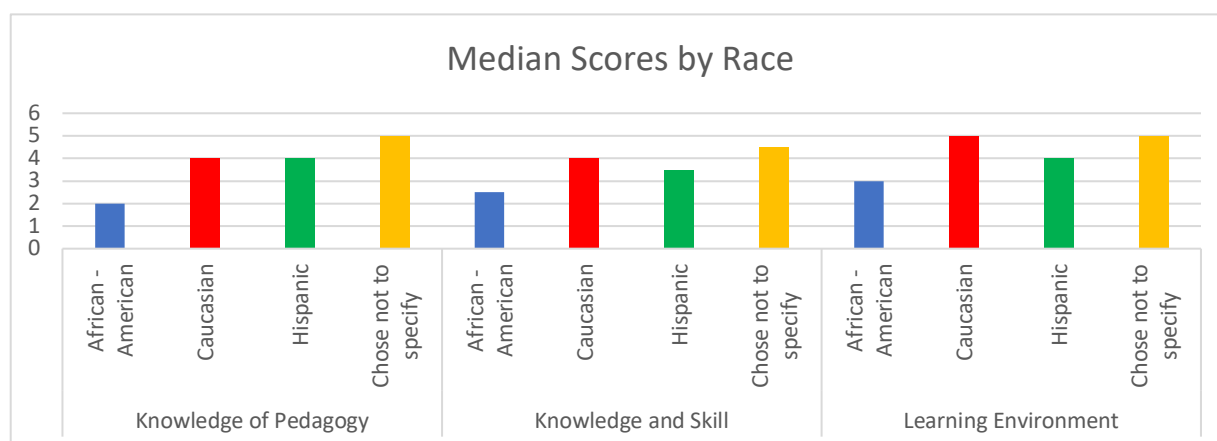
The same sequence of analyses used to measure associations between gender and the three categories described above were also performed on the variable of race. There were three races represented: African-American (n = 1), Caucasian (n = 7), Hispanic (n = 1), and one participant who chose not to disclose. It should be noted that only the Caucasian race had multiple responses, and the analysis would be appropriate. With the other races, as there is only

one entry, the median associated with that subject's response would be attributed as median.

Figure 4.2 displays the results. Again, Kendall's Tau-b was performed for each variable to measure the strength of association. The results (see Table 4.4) show that it is evident that the Sig >0.05 indicates that there is no significant association between race and "Knowledge of Pedagogy," nor race and "Knowledge and Skill," and there is no significant association between race and "Learning Environment."

Figure 4.2

Median Scores by Race



Note. Likert scale 0–5

Table 4.4*Kendall's Tau-b Results by Race*

		Value	Asymptotic Standardized Error ^a	Approximate T ^b	Approximate Significance
Race and Knowledge of Pedagogy					
Ordinal by Ordinal	Kendall's tau-b	.464	.241	1.569	.117
	Spearman Correlation	.514	.263	1.694	.129 ^c
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	.570	.180	1.964	.085 ^c
N of Valid Cases		10			
		Value	Asymptotic Standardized Error ^a	Approximate T ^b	Approximate Significance
Race and Knowledge and Skill					
Ordinal by Ordinal	Kendall's tau-b	.235	.339	.660	.509
	Spearman Correlation	.287	.379	.846	.422 ^c
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	.378	.262	1.155	.282 ^c
N of Valid Cases		10			
		Value	Asymptotic Standardized Error ^a	Approximate T ^b	Approximate Significance
Race and Learning Environment					
Ordinal by Ordinal	Kendall's tau-b	.213	.404	.500	.617
	Spearman Correlation	.249	.437	.727	.488 ^c
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	.363	.278	1.101	.303 ^c
N of Valid Cases		10			

Note. N represents number

*Sig > .05

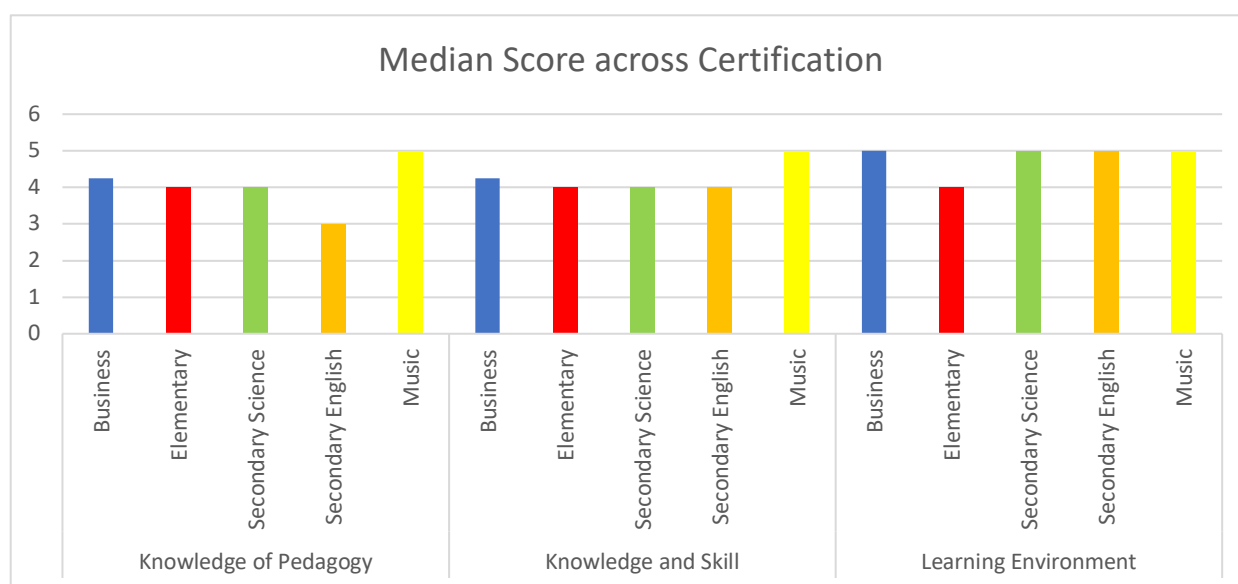
Comparing the medians of various factors by certification

The same sequence of analyses used to measure associations between gender and race and the three factors were also performed on the variable certification area. Five certification areas were represented by ten participants in the study and included: Elementary 1–6, Secondary

Business, Secondary English, Music K–12, and Secondary Science (Biology). Figure 4.3 displays the results. Again, Kendall's Tau-b was performed for each variable to measure the strength of association. The results (see Table 4.5) show that it is evident that the Sig >0.05 indicates that there is no significant association between certification and any of the three factors.

Figure 4.3

Median Scores Across Certification Area



Note. Likert scale 0–5

Table 4.5*Kendall's Tau-b Results for Certification*

Certification and Knowledge of Pedagogy		Value	Asymptotic Standardized Error ^a	Approximate T ^b	Approximate Significance
Ordinal by Ordinal	Kendall's tau-b	-.056	.152	-.363	.717
N of Valid Cases		10			

Certification and Knowledge and Skill		Value	Asymptotic Standardized Error ^a	Approximate T ^b	Approximate Significance
Ordinal by Ordinal	Kendall's tau-b	.085	.274	.309	.757
N of Valid Cases		10			

Certification and Learning Environment		Value	Asymptotic Standardized Error ^a	Approximate T ^b	Approximate Significance
Ordinal by Ordinal	Kendall's tau-b	.107	.235	.450	.653
N of Valid Cases		10			

Note. N represents number.

*Sig > .05

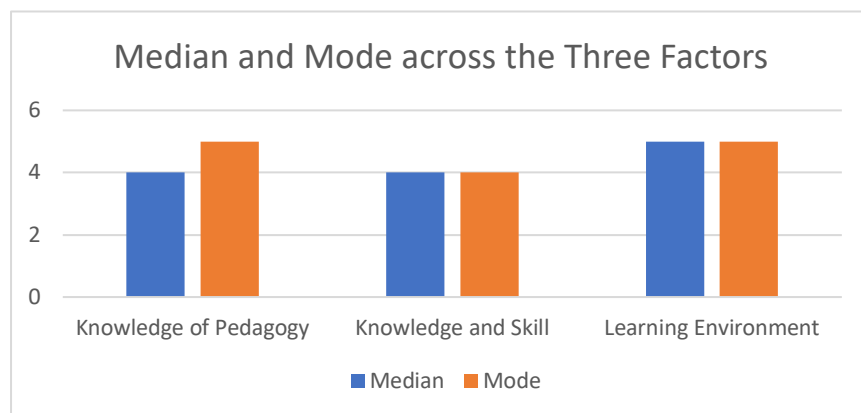
Overall analysis of data for research question one

The overall median and mode for the factors without the disaggregating by race, gender, or certification area are shown in Figure 4.4. For all categories, efficacy ratings fall in the “Pretty confident” (indicated with a score of 4) or “Extremely confident” (indicated with a score of 5) range. Taking all of the survey data and analysis into consideration, the response to research

question one is that efficacy levels regarding novice teachers' perceptions of readiness to teach as measured by the edTPA Teacher Survey are high.

Figure 4.4

Overall Analysis of the Aggregate by Factors



Note. Likert scale 0–5

Analysis of data for research question two

The second research question asked: How do novice teachers perceive the edTPA process as an influence on their professional practices? This question was explored through the interviews, individual survey responses, edTPA scores (for those who submitted), and lesson plan review (in cases where a lesson plan was provided to the researcher).

The interview questions were created based on social constructivist and self-efficacy theories as well as themes that emerged in the literature review. In the qualitative analysis, the researcher used the process of assigning memos and identifying themes among responses based on those common across cases. The researcher identified *a priori* codes from interview questions that related to specific themes, and those are: 1.) general perceptions pertaining to the edTPA

preparation process; 2.) current beliefs related to edTPA score/portfolio preparation as indicator of readiness (retrospective); 3.) edTPA process as influence on current professional beliefs and practices 4.) barriers to success on the edTPA; and 5.) novice teachers' suggestions related to edTPA improvement. The interview questions and other data sources (lesson plan and edTPA score) that inform each theme are found in Table 4.6. Results will be discussed as they relate to these six themes.

Table 4.6

Resulting Themes with Inclusion of Data Sources for Discussion

Theme	Data Source
1. General perceptions pertaining to the edTPA preparation process	Interview question 1
2. Current beliefs related to edTPA score/portfolio preparation as indicator of readiness (retrospective)	Interview questions 2–5 Lesson Plan Analysis edTPA score edTPA Teacher Survey
3. edTPA process as influence on current professional beliefs and practices	Interview question 6 Lesson Plan Analysis
4. Barriers to success on the edTPA	Interview questions 7–10
5. Novice teachers' suggestions related to edTPA improvement	Interview question 11

Theme one: General perceptions pertaining to the edTPA portfolio preparation process

Theme one, general perceptions pertaining to the edTPA portfolio preparation process, was informed by the open-ended question one of the semi-structured interview: “Describe your

overall edTPA experiences.” As outlined previously in this paper, the edTPA is an educative teacher performance assessment. As such, it is unlike other licensing exams like the PRAXIS that solely measure content knowledge. Rather, edTPA requires candidates to negotiate a *process* of extensive planning based on a.) school context and knowledge of students and pedagogy b.) classroom instruction with video-taping and self-reflection, and c.) assessment of student learning and a reflection on individual performance. This is not an assessment that takes place in a three-hour sitting; the edTPA involves days or weeks wherein candidates apply pedagogical knowledge and skills to demonstrate attainment of the edTPA targets based on the rubrics for planning, instruction, and assessment.

In order to capture teachers’ perceptions of this process, the researcher asked participants to try to boil down their experience into a word or short phrase and then provide some explanation of that through their recollections of the experience. Following are excerpts from each participant’s transcript. Pseudonyms have been applied to maintain confidentiality.

Colin: My overall experience can be summed up in one word . . . strenuous. The reason I say strenuous is the standards that are expected to be met on the edTPA is more advanced than would be appropriate for a novice teacher.

Shane: The emotion I can think of is anxiety. It’s just screwed up . . . I felt that it was very repetitive. It was like—why do I have to show this multiple times? It just added more stress because student teaching was already stressful.

Joshua: It’s definitely too much. Maybe I’m a little bitter towards it, but I think it’s a little ridiculous to expect a student teacher to do that much. I was bugging out.

Patrick: If I had to do it in one word, I'm not trying to be cynical, but it was painful. One of the things they teach you in graduate school and student teaching is that you don't want to overwhelm students with the instructions. I thought how complicated it was, the number of tasks within the tasks, and the way that they were labeled and all of that and the processes were just daunting.

Laura: Tedious! It's so repetitive . . . I get that it's reflection, but it's too much on top of student teaching.

Sharon: I would say mostly stressful. It overshadowed student teaching because I was just focused on passing edTPA rather than enjoying it and getting to know my students.

Jen: Abandoned! It was H. E. double hockey sticks. It was really the most difficult thing ever and I was scared. It was like if you don't pass this, your career is done.

Kara: Tedious. I didn't get anything out of it.

Liz: It helped me to think critically about myself, which was really helpful.

Kate: Nuisance. It was extra work that was not needed. I had to be more focused on the end result not the process of learning more about being in the classroom.

Everyone except for Liz recollected that the edTPA process was emotionally taxing for various reasons including its interference with the clinical placement experience. Strong language relaying this sentiment from "bugging out" to feelings of abandonment support that the majority of participants perceive the process as a negative one.

Theme two: Current beliefs related to edTPA score/portfolio preparation as indicator of readiness (retrospective)

Results from theme two, current beliefs related to edTPA score/portfolio preparation as indicator of readiness (retrospective), were informed through various data sources such as the interviews, edTPA scores (when reported), lesson plans (when shared), and individual survey responses indicating personal efficacy levels (low, middle, high) related to the three sub-categories on the edTPA Teacher Survey. The individual efficacy levels were determined by first identifying the individual's responses to each question, and then categorizing questions into each of the three categories of the survey: pedagogical knowledge, knowledge and skills, and learning environment. Then the researcher classified Likert-type responses 1–5 into categories of low efficacy, moderate efficacy, or high efficacy related to preparedness to teach. The following operational definitions clarify headings for low, middle, and high:

- Low: Not at all confident & Slightly confident; responses of 1 or 2
- Mid: Moderately confident; response of 3
- High: Pretty confident & Extremely confident; responses of 4 or 5

Then, the researcher totaled responses in each low, middle, and high category and converted the mode to a percentage by dividing the total number of responses that fell into each category by the total number of survey questions informing that category (see Table 4.2). The category (low, middle, high) with the highest percentage was reported for each factor.

The researcher also included the edTPA score when reported. It should be noted that all participants met the cut score, 37 for secondary certification areas and 44 for elementary certification, on their first attempt at the test. Those who took the waiver due to the impact of the

COVID-19 pandemic, do not have a reported score. Lastly, the lesson plan was evaluated using the edTPA rubrics for Task 1: Planning. Per the edTPA scoring guidelines, target scores on the rubric are considered to be level three or better on a scale of 1–5. The researcher has taught elementary writing methods courses at the graduate level in a Connecticut educator preparation program since the spring of 2019. In these courses the edTPA rubrics were utilized to score a simulated portfolio matching the edTPA submission criteria for tasks one and two. Candidates were provided constructive feedback based on the language of the rubrics in order to prepare students for the official submission process and edTPA portfolio target performance levels. Therefore, the researcher has familiarity with the rubrics. Moreover, this researcher has the experience of evaluating lesson plans and instruction based on personal experience as a school principal who regularly evaluated staff using district templates and rubrics. This researcher has also been through extensive training in the area through a program called Teachscape that required the researcher to prove accuracy through inter-rater reliability assessments. Thus, this researcher is qualified to apply the edTPA rubrics in an effort to evaluate whether the lesson plans submitted are at a target level.

Table 4.8 offers a comparison of efficacy levels across cases and clearly indicates that all participants except Colin feel that they were confident in their preparedness to teach related to pedagogy, knowledge, and skills, as well as creating an environment conducive to learning. The edTPA scores coupled with the evaluation of lesson plans offers additional evidence, yet the missing data points make it difficult to draw conclusions based on those pieces individually. Rather, a holistic approach using these data sources in addition to the narrative evidence from the interviews paints a more complete picture of participants' beliefs illustrating their recollections of teaching readiness in their first year of professional practice.

Table 4.8

Summary of Data Informing Theme Two: Current beliefs related to edTPA score/portfolio preparation as indicator of readiness (retrospective)

Case	Certification Area	Pedagogical Knowledge (Mode)	Knowledge & Skills (Mode)	Learning Environment (Mode)	edTPA score	Lesson Plan
Colin	Elem K–6	Low: 54.5%	Low: 50%	Mid:66.6%	Waiver	Plan met or exceeded target in all rubric areas
Shane	Elem K–6	High: 100%	High: 100%	High: 100%	55	Plan met or exceeded target in all rubric areas
Joshua	Music K–12	High: 77.2%	High: 75%	High: 66.6%	49	Not submitted
Patrick	English 7–12	Mid: 40.9%	High: 75%	High: 100%	50	Not submitted
Laura	Elem K–6	High: 63.6%	Mid:50%; High: 50%	High: 66.6%	52	District does not require lesson plans
Sharon	Biology 7–12	High: 81.8%	High: 75%	High: 100%	49	Uses standards of discipline; no formal plan
Jen	Business 7–12	High: 72.7%	High: 50%	High: 100%	Waiver	Plan met or exceeded target in all rubric areas
Kara	Elem K–6	Mid: 72.7%	High: 75%	High: 100%	53	Plan met or exceeded target in all rubric areas
Liz	Elem K–6	High: 95.5%	High: 100%	High: 100%	Waiver	Not submitted
Kate	Business 7–12	High: 91%	High: 100%	High: 100%	Waiver	Scores on all rubric areas were below target

Overall, the interview data related to theme two revealed that participants felt, across the board, that it was their programmatic experiences comprised of coursework, seminars, student teaching, and internship experiences, and the constructive feedback from professors and mentor teachers that were the most influential factors in preparing teachers for the classroom. The edTPA assessment and experiences related to the preparation of the portfolio were not pinpointed as educative or influential to practice. When asked whether the edTPA was an accurate predictor of their readiness to teach (interview question two), there were mixed results, with two participants answering yes; two with a qualified yes that explained it was the process, not the edTPA preparation; and six responses of no or “not really.” Of course, not everyone submitted a portfolio, but all had completed coursework requiring an edTPA-like portfolio submission as part of their course requirements. For those without a score, this practice experience was used as their point of reference. Some responses that highlight the group consensus are as follows:

Shane: I love teaching; I applied myself, and that is why I did well on the test.

Kara: Some of the things that make a great teacher cannot be measured, but it does a great job of getting teachers thinking and reflecting, which is incredibly important.

Patrick: Standardized testing is not a predictor of success. I’m just a really good test-taker, and I did well on this. I felt prepared to teach but not because of edTPA. I taught overseas, my internship experience, and clinical are what prepared me.

Kara: I love teaching, but it was a waste of time and I didn’t get anything out of this. The most helpful was the feedback from my internship and my mentor teacher in student teaching.

Kate: It was my student teaching experience and long-term subbing positions that prepared

me for the classroom and not edTPA.

Jen: My internship was where I learned the most. I was used as a sub and I felt more comfortable and felt like I learned more than just being a student teacher. I concentrated so much on edTPA [in clinical placement] because there was such a push to get it done before the deadline that I feel I did not get a good use of my student teaching.

Theme three: edTPA process as influence on current professional beliefs and practices

Theme three was informed by examining responses to interview questions seven through ten and participant lesson plans. These questions sought to provide some perspective related to areas such as research and theory, teaching philosophy, and professional development and whether participants may have transferred edTPA practices to their current placement. Interviews revealed that all participants had a thorough understanding of student-centered practices and what those entailed. Additionally, every participant shared that personal teaching philosophy related to those student-centered practices and were firmly in place prior to edTPA preparation. Sharon stated, "It [edTPA] aligns because my philosophy is students as active learners." Kara maintained, "I already had one [philosophy]. The edTPA had nothing to do with it."

Two participants revealed that the edTPA clashed with their personal philosophies. Jen shared that her edTPA experience "discouraged my philosophy. It's teaching to the test and that is not my approach! We need to teach life-skills rather than standardized tests." Kate echoed a very similar sentiment, pointing out that "the edTPA did not reinforce my philosophy. It was just more red tape and bureaucracy. I believe in project-based learning."

Several participants acknowledged that edTPA's student-centered philosophy reinforced or aligned with their own; yet, the assessment was not the impetus for or the foundation of their

personal philosophies. Laura shared that her philosophy is grounded in the idea of “making sure kids learn from their mistakes . . . and yes, the edTPA taught me that through the assessment and re-teaching.” Colin’s formation of his philosophy and his viewpoint of the edTPA’s influence on it revealed:

It [edTPA] definitely reinforced the philosophy I had developed even before I started my first class. The core philosophy in my teaching is that teaching is a form of service and some people are called. The three components of that service are being compassionate to the students, being patient with the students, and being creative with the students...what edTPA did was it reinforced the need to be compassionate to be patient, to be creative. It also reinforced another part of my belief system about foundational understanding. In other words, the fundamentals of teaching is more crucial than explaining syntax to sixth graders.

Patrick said that his philosophy is:

Just from observing and the little things I picked up on weren’t from edTPA. I think my philosophy of teaching is just you’re really honest with the students. You try and help them out wherever they are... And I wouldn’t say that edTPA shaped that philosophy...the one thing I liked about edTPA in terms of philosophy is it really does force you to think about what you want your students to learn and how you’re going to teach it to then and how you’re going to measure whether or not they learned it. I think that is one good aspect of it.

Statements from participants revealed that, again, philosophies were socially constructed through interactions with others and the various mastery and vicarious experiences that they had previously navigated before their edTPA assessment. Shane’s position echoed this theory: “I believe in children constructing their own learning, and again, these are things I learned while at [University].”

Similarly, accessing and utilizing research and theory were considered to be valuable practices; yet a recurring theme was that managing the day-to-day survival of teaching took precedence. Participants shared that their focus was more on developing habits, getting to know students, cultivating a positive culture, and daily lesson planning. Sharon stated, “I was in survival mode and just taking it day by day.” Generally, participants accessed advice and recommendations from colleagues or used what had been previously observed and learned relating to best practices elsewhere, which reinforces the notion that these practices are a social construct built over time and not an outcome of one specific event or assessment. Kara’s statement illustrates this notion: “Sometimes I tie things to things I learned in college or I look up articles for ideas.” Furthering this notion, Joshua said, “My research comes in just being in touch with current trends.”

Finally, the researcher was curious whether the edTPA assessment results are driving professional development in any way in the K–12 setting particularly with novice teachers’ induction process. Question eight was included specifically to investigate this question. Every participant reported that edTPA was not being used in any way in their districts of employment. Colin stated, “It [edTPA] has not crossed my mind since I took it.” Shane reiterated this idea, stating, “It has not come up once in conversation.” Patrick revealed the same, saying “not at all,” in response to whether edTPA is being used. Sharon expressed that her district was not using edTPA, but “it would be cool, though!” It is no wonder that participants are finding a breakdown in the transference of edTPA elements and the assessment itself to the K–12 setting. When induction is being doled out *en masse* and no connections are facilitated between the assessment and daily practice, it begs the question of how educators are using assessment to drive instruction with our novice teachers. It seems we are not.

Theme four: Barriers to success on the edTPA

To seek understanding of the question that arose from the literature related to potential barriers to success on the edTPA related to certain fixed factors such as race, gender, and socio-economic status, the researcher included question six in the semi-structure interview. Question six asked respondents to consider the following: In your experience, did you find that there were any barriers (cultural, linguistic, racial, socio-economic, gender, or other) related to your success on the edTPA? If so, were you able to overcome or compensate for them and how? Responses to this question were varied.

Colin believed that there were no barriers to his success because of his background and education. He stated that as a college-educated man, he had the necessary tools to navigate the assessment.

Shane felt that while there were no barriers related to her personal experiences, she found that the language used on the edTPA was unique to the assessment and proved difficult to understand. She felt that she had to “deconstruct the questions” in order to understand them and that primarily; this was an edTPA problem in and of itself as opposed to something an individual would bring to the table.

Laura grew up in a Spanish-speaking household. She noted that English is not her first language, and she accessed English as a Second Language supports throughout her elementary and secondary education. Laura shared that she had to “look some things up, do some research, and overcome” misunderstandings. Through her perseverance with the challenge, she was able to break down any potential language barriers.

Kate noted that she “had to borrow an iPad” to complete Task 2 Instruction of the edTPA that requires candidates to record themselves teaching a lesson to a group of students, edit the video, and upload it for submission. Kate noted that she “shouldn’t have had to borrow” something to complete the task. Kara hinted at this same issue, but she pointed out that the school where she completed her clinical placement “just gave me the materials I needed.”

Patrick’s interpretation of the question was somewhat different. He pointed out that “all tests have innate bias” but that he did not personally experience anything that would have prevented him from doing well. All other respondents shared that they had experienced no barriers related to accessing or completing the portfolio.

Theme five: Novice teachers’ suggestions related to edTPA improvement

The final question in the interview gave participants an opportunity to express anything else they would like to share regarding the edTPA process as a measure of teaching readiness. Theme five was informed by this question and relates to what the participants believe could be done to improve the process now that they have been in the classroom putting their learning into practice. Following are some excerpts from their final thoughts:

Colin: It should be more of a reflection on the teacher prep programs themselves. You have numerous programs in Connecticut, and there has to be a way to measure their effectiveness, especially since the state says if you want to be a teacher, you have to go through this process. We do need it, we do need it, but I don’t there should be a cut-off score right away because it’s still too new . . . tweak that foundation and cut out specializations. Just get it bare bones. Then maybe 10, 15 years down the line or even five, start adding specialization component. There has to be some measure of standards that says to Connecticut, okay, you can teach. There has to be.

Shane: It didn't do a lot for me personally, like to be completely honest. I feel like edTPA isn't necessary. I think it's a bit unfair because . . . being a good teacher or being an effective teacher happens over the years. Teaching is, you know, very fluid. It's you learn as you go along. And I don't think the edTPA really measures how effective a teacher can be.

Joshua: The only thing I can say is that I shouldn't have to do TEAM as a first-year teacher if I score a certain number on edTPA because from what I understand edTPA is similar to the BEST portfolio. Why should I have to do something while I'm student teaching and then do another thing in my first year of teaching, when student teaching is hard enough and then first year teaching is hard enough?

Patrick: I really disliked it. I thought it was pretty awful at the time. But at the same time there's a part of me that wonders if it's a necessary evil. I didn't like doing it, but I also understand why. I think the dangerous thing is I know where a lot of people are coming from with standardized tests. I get that if you came from a certain background or you grew up in a certain place, you might not be exposed to certain vocabulary, but at the end of the day, I feel like for something this important—teaching—there's got to be some barometer for whether or not you're qualified. I think that we need to strike that balance between being understanding of people's specific needs while at the same time, finding a way to measure them in whether or not they are capable of leading that classroom. To be candid, there are some people that should not be teaching a classroom and it's a lot harder to weed them out on the front end.

Laura: Now that I'm going through TEAM, it seems redundant. edTPA is just stressed on top of grad work. TEAM is very similar to edTPA, and it just seems unfair to have to do both.

Sharon: I think it's for the best, but so stressful. I was so worried about the cut-score. I was really stressed. I felt like I could have been so much more involved in student teaching if there was no edTPA.

Jen: If I can make any recommendation at all, either change the timing of it and not have it done during student teaching or get rid of it entirely. Because honestly in my personal opinion, it didn't help me. It stressed me out more. Maybe it could be done alongside TEAM or something else, but when you're doing it as a student teacher, it's extremely stressful...I have to submit, and I have to make sure that I say all this stuff on a video and all this kind of stuff. And it really takes away from the student teaching experience.

Kara: I wish edTPA would come to watch me teach instead of doing the video and reflection. Sometimes what you plan isn't always what happens in the lesson and it made doing the reflection really hard.

Liz: I think it is a good reflection of teacher readiness. Even if teachers don't try their hardest to prepare, the process still forces them to do some reflecting and a good amount of planning.

Kate: In my opinion, it should go away. [The University] has a great education program. It helped me become a teacher. The edTPA was unnecessary expense and just added more bureaucracy where it is not needed. I just read a book called *I Won't Learn from You*, and it is about creative maladjustment. It gave me the answers I needed.

A synthesis of these excerpts reveals that current teachers believe the process needs improvement. Some acknowledge that the assessment, or some version of the assessment, is necessary to have so that standards can be employed and programs can be evaluated for effectiveness. Yet, the majority feel that the edTPA should be eliminated or that it should be removed from the semester where student teaching occurs. There is also the suggestion that TEAM is a redundant process to edTPA and that something should be done to streamline those two practices.

Summary

This study sought to determine what novice teachers' levels of self-efficacy are regarding readiness to teach as measured by the edTPA Teacher Survey. Results showed that the overall median and mode for the factors without the disaggregating fall in the pretty confident (indicated with a score of four) or extremely confident (indicated with a score of five) range. Taking all of the survey data and analysis into consideration, the response to research question one is that novice teachers' levels of self-efficacy regarding readiness to teach as measured by the edTPA Teacher Survey are high.

Furthermore, the researcher sought to understand and convey how novice teachers perceive the edTPA process as an influence on their professional practices. Overwhelmingly, participants reveal that the edTPA process of preparing a portfolio that addresses the essential tasks within has little to no influence on their daily practice. All indicated that it was indeed the program's specific coursework and professors who most influenced and prepared candidates to become the teachers they are today. Overall, the participants felt that the edTPA process was an over-complicated, redundant, and anxiety-inducing experience that detracted from their clinical placement; further, most indicated that they wished the edTPA had not occurred during student teaching because looking back, it took away from the learning experience and all that clinical placement had to offer.

Moreover, none of the participants could say that the edTPA process influenced individual teaching philosophies or inclinations to seek out research or theory when planning for instruction or assessment. However, there were those who indicated that the process aligned with or reinforced beliefs and practices that may have already been in place. Two individuals indicated that the edTPA negatively impacted or stood at odds with their philosophy of teaching.

In sum, research question two explored how novice teachers perceive the edTPA process as an influence on their professional practice. The qualitative data collected revealed that the answer to this question is: the process does not influence their daily practice in any meaningful way. In Chapter V, the researcher will summarize and discuss interpretation of the findings, suggest recommendations for future research, and explore implications for educational leaders.

Chapter V

Conclusions and Implications

The edTPA performance assessment is being used to evaluate teacher candidates' practice and pedagogy in more than 919 educator preparation programs in 41 states and the District of Columbia (edTPA.aacte, 2020). In the fall of 2019, the state of Connecticut joined the movement and implemented edTPA with cut scores for all teacher candidates seeking initial licensure. It is universally acknowledged that teaching is a profession that demands comprehensive and intensive preparation, evaluation, and licensing practices in order to cultivate the most qualified individuals. However, there is a good deal of controversy over the means by which our nation measures this readiness to teach.

In Connecticut, the implementation of the edTPA was met with resistance, and the literature review revealed similar resistance across the nation. Yet, the research does not fully represent the views of all stakeholders: namely, it does not represent novice teachers who have been through the edTPA process. What are their experiences? How confident were they in their readiness to teach upon entering the classroom on day one? How valuable was the edTPA process as a means of influencing and informing their current practice?

The purpose of this study was to describe novice teachers' efficacy related to readiness to teach as a result of having completed the edTPA portfolio during their educator preparation program or for initial state licensure. Additionally, the study explored whether the edTPA process influences the daily professional practice of novice teachers who completed the edTPA in Connecticut's first cohort under the high-stakes label.

Summary of the Findings

Survey Data

The analysis of the edTPA Teacher Survey, which examined novice teachers' levels of self-efficacy regarding readiness to teach, revealed high efficacy levels in all three categories measured. With the exception of one participant, new teachers felt confident to implement all aspects of instructional practices related to pedagogical knowledge, knowledge and skills, and learning environment. Additionally, no significant associations could be found among the various factors of gender, ethnicity, or certification and the three sub-categories of the survey.

The survey data provided a big picture summary indicating that novice teachers felt ready to teach upon entering the classroom on their first days. Bandura's self-efficacy theory framing this study asserts that high efficacy levels have been shown to lead to future success in one's concentration area. Given that nine out of ten of the study's participants indicated high levels of efficacy, it seems to follow that they would currently be experiencing success in the classroom. Though not a focal point of this study, their first-year's teaching evaluations and conversations with their supervisors would be an interesting area in which to follow up in a future study. Linking the efficacy results of this survey to artifacts and qualitative data from their current position could further develop the framework and the validity of the survey.

Simply examining the survey data alone, it is not possible to establish *why* efficacy levels are high and whether those levels were influenced by edTPA processes, preparation program experiences, other factors, or a combination of all. The subsequent qualitative discussion will be effective in providing the background and individual perspectives that are driving these quantitative results.

Qualitative Data

Theme 1: General perceptions pertaining to the edTPA preparation process

The general perceptions related to going through the edTPA portfolio process, whether for submission to the Connecticut State Board of Education or for fulfillment of program requirements within the selected institution, were overwhelmingly negative. Feelings ranged from aggravation at the minutiae related to various assessment tasks to full-on anxiety and fear of failure. Strong language relaying this sentiment from “bugging out” to feelings of abandonment support that the majority of participants perceive the process as a negative one. Looking at these perceptions through Bandura’s theoretical lens of self-efficacy beliefs, this researcher would certainly classify these negative emotions into the efficacy experience of negative physiological arousal. Recalling that this experience relates to the physiological symptoms and emotional states that influence self-efficacy judgments, whether positive or negative, the data indicates that nine out of ten participants likely had self-efficacy beliefs negatively impacted as a result of their experiences related to edTPA.

Theme 2: Current beliefs related to edTPA score/portfolio preparation as indicator of readiness (retrospective)

In general, edTPA scores were not considered to be a good indicator of candidates’ perceptions of readiness to teach. Even those who waived the assessment, which amounted to 40% of participants, felt that the process of preparing the portfolio did little to actually ready them for the classroom or positively influence efficacy levels. The data indicates that the most influential processes experienced during their program were not edTPA-related but hands-on experiences and constructive and specific feedback that left a lasting impression on their

professional practices. One of the key frameworks guiding this study goes back to ways in which we develop efficacy. Research shows that mastery experiences, wherein one effectively completes an authentic experience, are the most influential scenarios (Bandura, 1977). The opportunities that participants had to teach, observe, or assist in a real-world setting were, not surprisingly, a more educative experience than completing tasks related to the edTPA portfolio.

One over-arching theory of this study is that one's habits and practices are informed, or socially constructed, through our experiences with and observations of others. As Jen pointed out, she "took tips away from everyone. We all learned from each other." The idea that engagement in a single performance assessment could serve to both prepare and measure teachers' readiness was not supported by the participants in this study. Rather, it was through multiple and varied interactions with mentor teachers, professors, students in classrooms, and classmates in the program that participants felt that they gained the skills and beliefs needed to teach.

Theme 3: edTPA process as influence on current professional beliefs and practices

Most participants asserted that personal teaching philosophies influencing how they implement their daily practice were not influenced by edTPA. Most could say that the edTPA aligned with and reinforced personal beliefs, but it did not contribute to the composition of them in any overt way.

Interestingly, despite one of SCALE's (2020) stated outcomes as being to "develop the confidence and skills they need to be successful in urban, suburban, and rural schools," none of the participants felt that their strongest task actually related to Task 2: Instruction. Rather, participants were divided as to feeling more confident in planning or assessment. This researcher

was surprised to learn that participants felt more prepared to do the behind-the-scenes tasks of planning and assessing as opposed to actually doing the component of teaching that essentially puts all the other elements on stage. One of the guiding questions coloring this theme asked participants whether there was a task of the assessment they felt more prepared to address than others. None reported Task 2: Instruction, and it causes one to wonder whether that is an unintended consequence of pairing edTPA with clinical placement. The mastery experience that is student teaching is where candidates practice teaching and learn from mistakes, gain meaningful feedback, and collaborate with master teachers to achieve success and build confidence. When the clinical experience is fractured and fraught with feelings of anxiety, frustration, and fear resulting from edTPA requirements, then perhaps participants' lack of confidence in performing instructional tasks is to be expected.

The review of lesson plans only further muddled the waters because half of participants either did not submit plans or revealed that plans were not required in their districts. It seems contradictory that high levels of confidence are noted in planning, but few participants are implementing elements of the task, at least to the extent required for edTPA. Kate's lesson plans would have been scored sub-target using edTPA rubrics, yet she pointed out that she "uses the planning piece daily. I have to re-plan almost daily and be flexible based on the current environment (COVID-19)." So, there seems to be a disconnect between what edTPA and participants consider to be essential elements of planning for novice teachers.

Theme 4: Barriers to Success on the edTPA

Participants in this study came from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, genders, and certification areas spanning K–12. Across this spectrum of experiences, only a few suggested that there could be barriers to success on the edTPA. Those barriers, however, were not linked to

race or gender. The most common issue was related to the construct and language of the assessment itself. Participants felt the assessment was confusing to navigate and contained language specific only to that assessment as opposed to more general educational jargon that they would have come across in their program or experiences. The participant from a non-English speaking household felt that there were some terms that were challenging, but she persevered to overcome any potential obstacles. Thus, the biggest takeaway based on these participants' experiences was that the biggest obstacles to success stem from the test itself and could be remedied through a revision of the assessment.

Theme 5: Novice teachers' suggestions related to edTPA improvements

There is little doubt that the novice teachers in this study feel that the edTPA portfolio needs improvement and that in its current state, it has little to no meaningful value for new teachers. The majority felt that the edTPA should be eliminated or that it should be removed from the semester where student teaching occurs. There was also the suggestion that Teacher Education and Mentoring program (TEAM) is a redundant process to edTPA. TEAM is designed to provide Connecticut's novice teachers with ongoing support and professional growth in five different modules: classroom environment, planning, instruction, assessment, and professional responsibility (ct.gov). Participants felt that something should be done to streamline edTPA and TEAM so that new teachers are not spending valuable time repeating the components of the edTPA on which mastery was already demonstrated.

Interpretation of Findings

The review of literature revealed several themes that warrant discussion in terms of this study's findings. Recent research into novice teachers' perceptions related to edTPA indicated

similarities and differences to this study's findings. One positive idea that ran through both previous research and the current study was that the edTPA fostered a habit of personal reflection that carried over to teachers' daily practice. The practice of using self-reflection to modify lessons and assessments proves to be a valuable effect of the edTPA process. On the other hand, relevant research also showed that novice teachers felt that the edTPA was a redundant and time-laden task that was more idealistic than realistic when it came to implementation of the framework in daily practice. This notion was strongly supported among participants and highlighted by the lack of carry-over to current practices related to elements of planning, in particular, but also apparent by the absence of an edTPA influence on teaching philosophies as well as the overall dissatisfaction with the edTPA process in general. Many new teachers have expressed their annoyance with edTPA and the "teach to the test" mentality it spurs in preparation programs. The interference with the clinical placement was one of the most common complaints among this study's and other studies' participants. In all, there is consensus among new teachers, both in this study and nationwide, that edTPA is predominantly a means to an end as opposed to a process that instills a lasting application of the assessment's tasks.

Claims of testing bias related to racial, economic, linguistic, and other factors were also prevalent in the research. These claims warn that the test's biases are creating barriers to the profession in a time when teacher shortages, particularly teachers of color, are on the rise. Though other studies have found evidence to support this notion, this study did not find any significant associations between the variables of race, gender, or certification area and perceptions of success with edTPA. In fact, this study reinforced efficacy beliefs related to potential barriers, and participants indicated that with hard work and perseverance, they were able to find success. Others claimed Pearson and SCALE held the key to making the test more

accessible to everyone regardless of one's gender, ethnicity, or socio-economic status, and this could be accomplished rather easily by amending the specific and confusing jargon unique to the edTPA.

Critics of the assessment cited multiple issues with edTPA, including unintended consequences like creating barriers to the field of education, emphasizing test preparation over meaningful clinical placement experiences, and the redundancy of the assessment's tasks. This study supports all of those claims with the exception of barriers to the profession. On the other hand, proponents of the assessment noted that successful completion of edTPA fostered feelings of camaraderie and self-satisfaction. This study did not yield similar results, but there were not specific questions related to this idea. Several participants insisted they just wanted to get done with it and that in fact, they felt like they could not collaborate with peers at all. It was conveyed that the presentation of the edTPA by the university made it clear that the assessment was an individual experience and not a group effort. Without peer collaboration and the advantage of seeing models or released testing items that would aid in the construct of shared understanding, the assessment likely seemed even more mysterious and daunting.

It is considered best practice in teaching to begin with the end in mind and present evaluation criteria to students at the start of a project. Likewise, good teachers use mentor texts and modeling strategies as part of their instruction. According to participants, this was not an approach employed by the institution based on their interpretation of the edTPA guidelines for high-stakes assessment. Consequently, a feeling of collegiality and shared success was not readily apparent among all participants in this study. Jen's comments captured this feeling when she shared, "classmates and I discussed [edTPA], but there again we were told we couldn't contribute or help. I honestly felt like a dead end and more of a burden." Patrick hinted at the

idea that there were some connections made, but not related to shared success. He noted, "I was really in touch with a lot of people. We formed a bond. I think everyone going through that does. We were constantly trading ideas and talking, and everyone was just overwhelmed by it." The bonds seem more like the ones created by survivors of trauma as opposed to collegiate relationships.

Limitations of the Study

One element of this study that impacted the outcome was the presence of the pandemic COVID-19. Because of the virus's threat, schools closed their doors and rules changed. There were no opportunities to study this problem in a school setting, and so a data point had to be revised as the researcher moved from classroom observations to lesson plan analysis. Yet this data point provided an interesting lens because it allowed the researcher to compare assessment requirements of edTPA to teachers' realities in terms of planning for instruction. Social distancing also eliminated the ability for testing agencies to proceed as they normally would. With schools moving to online learning mid-semester, edTPA had to offer a waiver to teacher candidates in the spring of 2020 because candidates could not submit evidence related to Task 2 Instruction without having real-world classrooms in which they could video-tape lessons. The edTPA score, which was to be considered in the analysis for all participants, had to be used differently since only 60% of participants had a score. Though the data points were compromised in a sense, triangulation of the data from the interviews, member checks, and individual survey responses alongside the edTPA score and lesson plan for some participants lends credibility to the study. Furthermore, the nature of a perceptions study makes it impossible to delineate which experiences, personal versus edTPA processes, actually contributed to participants' viewpoints.

It is possible they internalized elements of the process and attributed those to other personal experiences. The researcher cannot control for this and must rely on individuals' recollections.

It was acknowledged in this study that the researcher had first-hand experiences with teacher candidates' unfavorable opinions related to edTPA and that those could be a source of potential bias from the researcher. However, those opinions came from candidates in the process of completing an edTPA simulation in order to pass a graduate class and not from novice teachers. This researcher believes that emotions that surround experiences in the moment tend to wane with time, and feedback from those candidates was likely fueled by proximity to the issue. In this study, participants had the benefit of distance between their edTPA experience and the study, so emotions would likely be tempered and more accurate. The researcher also set aside any preconceptions and based all interpretations solely on the data collected, ensuring confirmability of the study.

Transferability is how qualitative researchers demonstrate how research findings are applicable to other contexts. This researcher focused the study on one institution's master's degree and certificate program in education, and the participants came from a variety of backgrounds and experiences. This collective case study enabled the researcher to gain thick descriptions of the research questions, which allows for transferability. The confirmable findings represent perspectives that can be transferred to other Teacher Education Preparation Programs (EPPs) providing master's programs in education. The researcher cautions that these findings may not transfer to undergraduate programs due to the educational experiences and accumulation of life experiences of participants in this study. Students in a master's program may be more likely than undergraduates to have family and work obligations outside of school that could have influenced their perceptions of the edTPA process. However, the edTPA is now an experience

that will be common to all teaching candidates and teachers in Connecticut, the feelings and emotions related to completing the assessment are likely to have strong similarities for all given that the assessment is standardized.

Recommendations

Certain components of this study were altered from their conception to final product due to the impact of the global pandemic and the effects on local school systems, State Boards of Education, EPPs, and others. Initially, the researcher had planned to conduct classroom observations, but the access to school buildings was cut-off almost completely to visitors and researchers. The decision to have participants share a lesson plan was a substitute for the field observation, but a written plan does not yield the same kind of robust and authentic information that a real-time observation would. Some participants were not required by their school districts to compose lesson plans and others did not have one to share with this researcher. Consequently, it was somewhat difficult to ascertain to what extent the practices taught and assessed through edTPA tasks of planning, instruction, and assessment really carry over to a classroom setting once candidates become certified and employed educators. It would be informative to know more about this, as results from this collective case study reveal that little of the actual edTPA preparation process, including the extensive planning, reflection, and inclusion of research-based theory and practices seems to carry over to the novice teachers' classrooms.

Additionally, this researcher limited the study to one private institution and focused specifically on graduates of that university's master's degree with certification program in education. Few of the participants had been education majors as undergraduates, and the majority of participants revealed that the program was a means to a second career choice or that the program was a completely different field of study than their undergraduate programs. Some

were returning to school after a decade or longer in the workforce, not as educators, and this researcher wonders whether results would be different if the study's focus was on an undergraduate educator preparation program as opposed to a master's program. This would be an area for further research and depending on results, could reveal ways in which master's programs can further embed edTPA into the program's curriculum particularly for secondary candidates. Furthermore, had the researcher known that the response rate would be around 8%, she likely would have expanded the study to include other master's programs in the area so as to get a more complete picture of the preparation process across more and varied certification areas and EPPs.

This study highlighted the idea that many secondary teachers felt somewhat disconnected from the edTPA preparation process without the benefit of the elementary literacy methods courses that united the cohort in elementary education. Because the secondary teachers took courses more specialized and in-depth to their one specific area, such as music, biology, or business, there was not a common course that could have facilitated the opportunity to form bonds with fellow candidates and create opportunities for discussion and collaboration on the tasks. Another potential area for future researchers would be to focus on particular licensure areas, such as the special areas whose certifications range K–12: foreign languages, unified arts, and secondary content area certifications. Results from studies in these areas could better inform evaluation methods so that the edTPA portfolio process could be more supportive and meaningful.

One final area for recommendation is based on this researcher's experience as a school principal, and my quest to help new teachers acclimate to the professional culture, climate, and classroom. Much as we tailor instruction to meet individual student needs, it is this researcher's belief that we should tailor professional development to meet the needs of individual novice

teachers. Every new teacher brings a different life experience to the classroom, and a one-size-fits-all approach to induction is not necessarily the best use of time when time is such a commodity in the first few years in the classroom. Finding ways to use the information the scorers provide in the edTPA rubrics as a tool to fashion a unique path to permanent certification for individuals would be a wise use of school districts' time and money. Likely, it could also reduce redundancy that occurs when districts place all new teachers in induction programs such as TEAM, where everyone gets the same cure, and which seems to replicate much of the content of the edTPA process.

Implications

A retrospective summation of participants' general perspectives related to the edTPA portfolio process reveal an overwhelmingly common theme: preparing the edTPA portfolio during clinical placement is a bad idea. Participants shared that they were "bugged out" and stressed, that the expectations are not only redundant and tedious but are also far beyond what a candidate should be expected to accomplish. The idea surfaced among participants that the EPPs tailored certain classes to the edTPA at the cost of overshadowing the course's primary learning objectives. Some suggested that EPPs were "teaching to the test" and pushing an agenda of passing rates over authentic learning experiences. Many suggested what seems like a very good idea: that the institution should offer classes specifically focused on edTPA and make them more substantive than the short seminars that were utilized. Given that the edTPA has not been used in any of the districts where participants are now employed, the message to EPPs should be clear and that is the focus of the educational program should be on offering courses that provide mastery experiences within the content areas rather than over-emphasizing a single evaluation measure. The personal efficacy that will result from success in various mastery and vicarious

experiences coupled with the constructive feedback from professors and expert teachers in the field, will have long-lasting positive effects on novice teachers' professional practice.

Mulling over the idea that the edTPA is nothing but a distant, painful memory once teachers enter the classroom, this researcher wondered *why* the assessment is so little-utilized in K–12 settings. In Connecticut, the edTPA only began to be used in the fall of 2018, so it is possible that it has not trickled down to the K–12 setting to a large extent. Yet the assessment does not seem to be going anywhere anytime soon. Thus, educational leaders at the K–12 level should be determining ways that edTPA could be a useful tool for them. Some participants pointed out how similar or redundant the edTPA is to the requirements of TEAM, the induction program used by districts for new teachers as a requirement to get more advanced licensing. One thought would be to have districts use the edTPA rubric feedback to ascertain the areas in which new teachers excelled and areas where focused professional development would be most valuable. Some of the participants shared that they wished more emphasis had been put on classroom management, differentiation, and understanding special education. TEAM could focus first-year professional development on these areas but could also look at the rubrics for individuals determine what tasks were at an acceptable level and which would benefit from more education or mentoring. Essentially, new teachers could “test out” of some areas of TEAM. This could potentially save districts time, money, and effort by having a more focused path for new teachers moving to the next level of certification.

One final question that came to this researcher's mind was: Why must the edTPA be completed during clinical placement? Surely the implications stemming from participants' consistently negative experiences should inform the practices of preparing institutions. It seems that teacher candidates who could focus on their student teaching experience, and all of the

invaluable lessons learned therein, would produce a much more informed and better-quality portfolio if they were able to prepare it in an experience *following* clinical placement. Preparing institutions should take a close look at how the edTPA portfolio can be less intrusive on the clinical placement experience. With the assessment being used in 41 states, and research beyond this study showing similar feelings among participants, one hopes that there are institutions who have responded and already adjusted how this assessment is most effectively embedded into their programs; if none exist, then it is an area that demands action research!

Conclusions

Albert Bandura (1977), whose theories frame this study, said, “In order to succeed, people need a sense of self-efficacy, to struggle together with resilience to meet the inevitable obstacles and inequities of life.” Despite participants’ strong persistent negative recollections of their edTPA experiences, they displayed high levels of confidence and a student-driven approach to learning. They persevered in the face of adversity to achieve their goal of being educators. It is evident many of the edTPA tested elements do not transfer to the classrooms of these novice teachers, yet these teachers employ a constructivist approach to continually adapt instruction to meet the needs of their students in the changing educational world that faces us. As the pendulum of the American education system, with its many acronyms, assessments, and initiatives, continues to swing, one must hold firm to the fundamentals: the mastery, vicarious, verbal, and emotional experiences that equip one with the confidence to press on and collaborate with colleagues to construct a classroom based on best practices in education.

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Appendix A

edTPA Teacher Survey

Directions: Please complete the following questions. You may choose to not disclose your demographic information.

Student Teaching Semester: Fall 2018 _____ Spring 2019 _____
 Fall 2019 _____ Spring 2020 _____

Please indicate what program are you in:

- _____ Elementary
- _____ Secondary English
- _____ Secondary Social Studies
- _____ Secondary Science
- _____ Secondary Math
- _____ Music
- _____ Business

Please indicate your **edTPA score** _____

Ethnicity: _____ Caucasian
 _____ African American
 _____ Hispanic
 _____ Asian
 _____ Native American
 _____ More than one race
 _____ Other/Choose not to disclose

Gender: _____ Male _____ Female _____ Choose not to disclose

The following survey will take approximately 15 minutes. Please respond to each question.

Rate each question based on your personal perception of your level of confidence in your ability to conduct each task.

1 = Not at all confident 2 = Slightly confident 3 = Moderately confident 4 = Pretty confident 5 = Extremely confident

- 1) How well do you feel prepared to teach the content of your discipline?
- 2) How well do you feel prepared to teach your students the academic language of the discipline?
- 3) How well do you feel prepared to engage students in the chosen language function (Bloom's verb) to develop the identified learning strategy for lessons?
- 4) How well do you feel prepared to implement instructional supports (scaffolding) to help students use academic language in lessons?
- 5) How well do you feel prepared to engage students in a positive learning environment?
- 6) How well do you feel prepared to craft meaningful lessons that build on one another (consecutive lessons) to help students deepen their understandings of content?
- 7) How well do you feel prepared to engage students in deeper thinking through effective questioning techniques within the content instruction?
- 8) How well do you feel prepared to plan assessments that effectively monitor student learning?
- 9) How well do you feel prepared to engage students in high leverage instructional practices (such as whole group and small group instruction)?
- 10) How well do you feel prepared to connect your instructional practice to research and/or theory?
- 11) How well do you feel prepared to use student assessment outcomes to guide next steps for instructional pathways?
- 12) How well do you feel prepared to incorporate supports for students' use of syntax (vocabulary and definitions, concepts) to deepen content understandings?
- 13) How well do you feel prepared to incorporate supports for students' use of discourse (application of concepts to the whole) to deepen content understandings?
- 14) How well do you feel prepared to provide meaningful feedback to students in order to guide their learning growth?
- 15) How well do you feel prepared to differentiate **instruction** in order to meet the learning needs of identified students?
- 16) How well do you feel prepared to modify **assessments** in order to meet the learning needs of identified students?
- 17) How well do you feel prepared to identify students' assets (prior knowledge) to determine beginning points for instruction?
- 18) How well do you feel prepared to implement effective teaching practices?
- 19) How well do you feel prepared to provide instruction on content vocabulary for your students?
- 20) How well do you feel prepared to lead whole group instruction for students?
- 21) How well do you feel prepared to lead small groups with leveled instruction for students?
- 22) How well do you feel prepared to justify that learning tasks are appropriate (age and/or ability level) for students?
- 23) How well do you feel prepared to plan re-engagement lessons for students who do not meet the targeted learning objective/goal?

- 24) How well do you feel prepared to connect your instruction to your students' cultural backgrounds?
- 25) How well do you feel prepared to connect your instruction to your students' personal interests?
- 26) How well do you feel prepared to engage in reflective analysis of your teaching craft for continuous improvement?
- 27) How well do you feel prepared to effectively manage students' behavior in your classroom?
- 28) How well do you feel prepared to effectively communicate with students' parents/guardians/families?
- 29) How well do you feel prepared to manage your own professional development in order to extend your personal learning?

Preparedness to teach		
Pedagogical knowledge	Knowledge & Skills	Learning Environment
3	1	5
4	2	27
6	10	28
7	29	
8		
9		
11		
12		
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Appendix B

Lesson Plan Checklist

edTPA	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
R1: Plans build students' understanding of an essential strategy & skills that support that strategy	Plans focus solely on skill w/o connection to strategy	Plans support student learning of skills with vague connections to strategy	Plans build on one another to support learning of the strategy with clear connections to skills	Plans build on each other with a meaningful context that supports learning of the essential strategy AND consistent connections to related skills	All of Level 4 plus: Plans build authentic connections & explain how teacher will use learning tasks and materials to lead students to independently apply strategy and related skills
R2: Planning to support varied student learning needs	NO evidence of planned supports OR Does not attend to ANY instructional requirements within IEP or 504 plans	Planned supports are loosely tied to learning objectives or central focus of the learning segment	Planned supports are tied to learning objectives & the central focus with attention to characteristics of the class as a whole	Planned supports are tied to learning objectives & the central focus. Supports address needs of specific individuals or groups with similar needs	Level 4 Plus: Supports include specific strategies to identify and respond to common developmental approximations or misconceptions
R3: Using knowledge of students to inform teaching and learning	Justification of learning tasks is missing or represents a deficit view of students and backgrounds	Justifies learning tasks with limited attention to students: *prior academic learning OR *personal, cultural, community assets	Justifies why learning tasks are appropriate using examples of students: *prior academic learning OR *personal, cultural, community assets	Justifies why learning tasks are appropriate using examples of students: *prior academic learning AND *personal, cultural, community assets	Level 4 plus: Justification is supported by principles from research/theory
R4: Identifying and supporting language demands	Language demands identified are not consistent with the language function or task OR Language demands are missing	Supports primarily address one language demand (syntax, discourse, vocabulary, function)	Supports primarily address two or more language demand (syntax, discourse, vocabulary, function)	Language supports address use of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vocabulary• Language function AND• One or more additional language demands (syntax/discourse)	Level 4 plus: Language supports are designed to meet the needs of students with different levels of language learning

R5: Planning assessment to monitor and support student learning	Assessments only provide evidence of students' use of skills OR No assessment requirements related to IEP or 504	Assessments provide limited evidence to monitor students' use of essential strategy or related skills	Assessments provide evidence to monitor students' use of: *essential strategy AND * related skills	Assessments provide multiple forms of evidence to monitor students' use of: *essential strategy AND * related skills	Level 4 plus: Assessments are strategically designed to allow individuals or groups with specific needs to demonstrate their learning
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Appendix C

Rubric 1: Planning for Literacy Learning

How do the candidate's plans build students' understanding of an essential literacy strategy for comprehending OR composing text and the skills that support that strategy?

Level 1 ⁴	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
<p>Candidate's plans for instruction focus solely on literacy skills without any connections to an essential literacy strategy for comprehending OR composing text.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>There are significant content inaccuracies that will lead to student misunderstandings.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Standards, objectives, and learning tasks and materials are not aligned with each other.</p>	<p>Candidate's plans for instruction support student learning of skills with vague connections to the essential literacy strategy for comprehending OR composing text.</p>	<p>Candidate's plans for instruction build on each other to support learning of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the essential literacy strategy for comprehending OR composing text with clear connections to skills. 	<p>Candidate's plans for instruction build on each other within a meaningful context that supports learning of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the essential literacy strategy for comprehending OR composing text with clear AND consistent connections to related skills. 	<p>Level 4 plus:</p> <p>Candidate's plans build an authentic connection between reading and writing.</p> <p>Candidate explains how s/he will use learning tasks and materials to lead students to independently apply the essential literacy strategy AND related skills.</p>

edTPA Elementary Education: Literacy with Mathematics Task 4 Assessment Handbook

Literacy Planning Rubrics continued

Rubric 2: Planning to Support Varied Student Learning Needs

How does the candidate use knowledge of his/her students to target support for students' literacy learning?

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
<p>There is no evidence of planned supports.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Candidate does not attend to ANY INSTRUCTIONAL requirements in IEPs and 504 plans.</p>	<p>Planned supports are loosely tied to learning objectives or the central focus of the learning segment.</p>	<p>Planned supports are tied to learning objectives and the central focus with attention to the characteristics of the class as a whole.</p>	<p>Planned supports are tied to learning objectives and the central focus. Supports address the needs of specific individuals or groups with similar needs.</p>	<p>Level 4 plus:</p> <p>Supports include specific strategies to identify and respond to common developmental approximations or misconceptions.</p>

Literacy Planning Rubrics continued

Rubric 3: Using Knowledge of Students to Inform Teaching and Learning

How does the candidate use knowledge of his/her students to justify instructional plans?

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Candidate's justification of learning tasks is either missing OR represents a deficit view of students and their backgrounds.	Candidate justifies learning tasks with limited attention to students' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> prior academic learning OR personal, cultural, or community assets. 	Candidate justifies why learning tasks (or their adaptations) are appropriate using examples of students' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> prior academic learning OR personal, cultural, or community assets. <p>Candidate makes superficial connections to research and/or theory.</p>	Candidate justifies why learning tasks (or their adaptations) are appropriate using examples of students' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> prior academic learning AND personal, cultural, or community assets. <p>Candidate makes connections to research and/or theory.</p>	Level 4 plus: Candidate's justification is supported by principles from research and/or theory.

Literacy Planning Rubrics continued

Rubric 4: Identifying and Supporting Language Demands

How does the candidate identify and support language demands associated with a key literacy learning task?

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Language demands ⁵ identified by the candidate are not consistent with the selected language function⁶ OR task. OR Language supports are missing or are not aligned with the language demand(s) for the learning task.	Language supports primarily address one language demand (vocabulary, function, syntax, discourse).	General language supports address use of two or more language demands (vocabulary, function, syntax, discourse).	Targeted language supports address use of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> vocabulary, language function, AND one or more additional language demands (syntax, discourse). 	Level 4 plus: Language supports are designed to meet the needs of students with different levels of language learning.

⁵ Language demands include: language function, vocabulary, syntax and grammar, and discourse (organizational structures, text structure, etc.).⁶ Language function refers to the learning outcome (verb) selected in prompt 4a (e.g., analyze, interpret).

Literacy Planning Rubrics continued

Rubric 5: Planning Assessments to Monitor and Support Student Learning

How are the formal and informal assessments selected or designed to monitor students' use of the essential literacy strategy to comprehend OR compose text and related skills?

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
<p>The assessments only provide evidence of students' use of skills.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Candidate does not attend to ANY ASSESSMENT requirements in IEPs and 504 plans.</p>	<p>The assessments provide limited evidence to monitor students' use of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the essential literacy strategy OR related skills <p>during the learning segment.</p>	<p>The assessments provide evidence to monitor students' use of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the essential literacy strategy AND related skills <p>during the learning segment.</p>	<p>The assessments provide multiple forms of evidence to monitor students' use of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the essential literacy strategy AND related skills <p>throughout the learning segment.</p>	<p>Level 4 plus:</p> <p>The assessments are strategically designed to allow individuals or groups with specific needs to demonstrate their learning.</p>

Appendix D**Semi-Structure Interview Protocol****Participant** _____**Demographic Information:**

Ethnicity:

- _____ Caucasian
- _____ African American
- _____ Hispanic
- _____ Asian
- _____ Native American
- _____ More than one race
- _____ Other/Choose not to disclose

Gender:

- Female _____
- Male _____
- Choose not to disclose _____

Background Questions:

1. How long have you been employed as a full-time classroom teacher?
2. What is your area of certification?
3. What grade level and subject(s) are you teaching now?
4. Where & when did you complete your teacher training (EPP)
5. What was your edTPA score? (may choose not to disclose)
6. Is your school of employment a Title I school?

Discussion Questions:

1. This is an exploratory study so I'm searching for individuals' experiences/feelings/perceptions surrounding their edTPA portfolio preparation. Please describe your overall edTPA experience.
2. Do you think your edTPA was an accurate indicator of your preparedness to teach now that you've been a full-time classroom teacher for a while?
3. On your first days in the classroom, did you feel like you were fully prepared to handle anything that may come your way as a result of completing the edTPA process?
4. Is there a specific edTPA Task (planning, instruction, or assessment) or component (instructional techniques, content knowledge & skills, learning environment) that you feel more adequately prepared to address than others as a result of your edTPA preparation at your Educator Preparation Program (EPP)?
5. What specific coursework or other preparation did you have at your EPP for the edTPA? Can you describe the process? Do you feel it was adequate? Would you recommend any modifications?
6. In your experience, did you find that there were any (cultural, linguistic, racial, socio-economic, gender, or other) barriers to your success on the edTPA?
 - a. If so, were you able to overcome or compensate for them? In what ways?
7. What is your understanding of student-centered teaching? How did going through the edTPA portfolio process prepare you to implement it in your classroom?
8. Have your edTPA portfolio results been used at your current district as a direction for your induction process and professional development? or have they been used in any way as a means of constructive feedback to you for professional growth?
9. Throughout the edTPA process, you are required to connect research on best practices and theory to your decision-making for planning, instructing, and assessing. Now that you are a full-time professional, what (if any) professional resources are you using to guide your practice?
10. How has the experience of going through the edTPA portfolio process shaped your philosophy of teaching?
11. Is there anything else you'd like to share regarding your experiences or reflections with the edTPA portfolio process as a measure of teacher readiness?

Appendix E

University of Bridgeport Informed Consent Template

[UB HRP-502 Revised 12/3/18]

1 - KEY INFORMATION ABOUT THE RESEARCHERS AND THIS STUDY

Study Title: Exploring Novice Teachers' Perceptions of edTPA as Indicator of Teaching Readiness

Study Sponsor: There is no sponsor.

Principal Investigator: Kathleen K. Wallace, M.Ed., Doctoral Candidate, University of Bridgeport

1.1 Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to take part in this research study. You are invited to be in this study because you graduated from UB's Graduate School of Education in the Fall of 2018 or later, completed the edTPA, and are now currently employed as a teacher in a Connecticut school. ***Taking part in this research study is voluntary.***

Things you should know:

- The purpose of this research project is to provide a platform for novice teachers to express their perceptions about the edTPA as a means of preparing classroom teachers and to share ways in which the edTPA influences your current practice. If you choose to participate, you will be asked to share a lesson plan of your choice and review this with the researcher using edTPA Task 1 (Planning) rubrics.
- Risks or discomforts from this research are limited to your level of comfort sharing lesson plans and your willingness to share your opinions and personal reflections on the edTPA evaluation and experience.
- The study will inform the existing body of research, specifically as it relates to Connecticut, as to the influence the evaluation has had on your professional practice.
- Taking part in this research study is voluntary. You don't have to participate, and you can stop at any time. Whatever you decide will not be held against you.

Please take the time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research study.

2. PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

1. 2.1 What is the research study about and why are we doing the research study?

This study will address the gap that exists in the research about edTPA by providing a platform from which novice teachers can share their perceptions of how well the edTPA

prepared them to teach and to what extent the edTPA influences their professional practice.

2. 2.2 *How long will the research last?*

I expect that this research will involve a total of approximately 1.5 hours of your time over three to four weeks. During that time, I will complete the document review and interview at the participant's convenience.

2.3 *How many people will be studied?*

I expect about 10 people will be in this case study. I expect that the entire case study will take approximately four months to complete with each subject providing approximately 1.5 hours of their time over three to four weeks.

3. *WHO MAY PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY?*

3.1 *What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?*

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to: describe your feelings and perceptions related to the edTPA share a lesson plan with the researcher that will be analyzed using edTPA Task 1 (planning) rubrics. The lesson will be of your choosing (class, time/day, subject) and the researcher will use a checklist based on edTPA rubrics 1–5 to guide the review. Additionally, at an agreed upon time and location, we will meet to conduct the interview, which I will audio-tape for accuracy of transcription. The interview will be semi-structured and should last about 30 minutes. The researcher would like to conduct the document review and interview when convenient to the participant, but during the months of October and November 2020. You will be asked to share demographic and personal data (gender, ethnicity, edTPA score), but you may choose to not disclose this information without repercussions. Any information shared will only be used for research purposes and all identifying markers will be removed for analysis and reporting.

3.2 *What happens if I say no, I do not want to be in this research?*

You may decide not to take part in the research, and it will not be held against you.

3.3 *What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?*

You agree to take part in the research now. You may stop at any time and it will not be held against you.

4. *INFORMATION ABOUT STUDY RISKS AND BENEFITS* **4.1 *Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me?***

There are no physical risks associated with this study. There is, however, the potential risk of loss of confidentiality. Every effort will be made to keep your information confidential; however, this cannot be guaranteed. Some of the questions we will ask you as part of this study may make you feel uncomfortable. You may refuse to answer any of the questions and may take a break at any time during the study. You may stop your participation in this study at any time.

4.2 *Will being in this study help me any way?*

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study.

5. CONFIDENTIALITY OF SUBJECT RECORDS

5.1 What happens to the information you collect?

Efforts will be made to limit your personal information to people who have a need to review this information. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the IRB and other representatives of this organization. Your identifiable information (name, address, etc.) collected for this research study will **not** be used or distributed to other investigators for future research studies, even if your identifiers are removed.

5.2 Can I be removed from the research without my OK?

The person in charge of the research study or the sponsor can remove you from the research study without your approval. Possible reasons for removal include insufficient amount of data provided. The sponsor can also end the research study early.

5.3 What else do I need to know?

5.3.1 A potential risk to participating in the study would be the possibility that certain emotions associated with your edTPA experience or program preparation would be recollected causing anxiety or stress.

5.3.2 Participants will not get paid to participate in the research study.

6 CONTACT INFORMATION

6.3 Who can I talk to?

If you have questions about this research (e.g. concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you), you may contact Kathleen Wallace (katwalk3617@gmail.com) or Faculty advisor, Dr. Nancy DeJarnette (ndejarne@bridgeport.edu).

This research has been reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), you may talk to UB's IRB Administrator at irb@bridgeport.edu.

7 RECORD OF INFORMATION PROVIDED

7.3 What documents will be given to me?

Your signature in the next section means that you have received copies of all of the following documents:

- This "Consent to be Part of a Research Study" document.
- This "Consent to Audio Recording" for purposes of this research

Signature Block for Capable Adult: Long Form

Your signature below documents your permission to take part in this research.

DO NOT SIGN THIS FORM AFTER THIS DATE

Signature of subject Printed name of subject

Signature of person obtaining consent Kathleen Wallace, M.Ed.

Printed name of person obtaining consent

?

10/23/2021

Date

Date

10/23/2020

Form Date

University of Bridgeport Informed Consent Template [UB HRP-502 Revised 12/3/18]**Consent/Assent to audio recording solely for purposes of this research.**

This study involves audio recording. If you do not agree to be recorded, you CAN STILL take part in the study.

____ Yes, I agree to be audio recorded. ____ No, I do agree to be audio recorded.

Signature Date